MAX WEBER

1930

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Still Life, 1930

Original Lithograph

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MAX WEBER

BY HOLGER CAHILL

With
Thirty-two Reproductions

1930
The Downtown Gallery
New York

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Max Weber

Holger Cahill

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MAX WEBER has lived the history of modern art in America. Its search and tribulation, its rebellion against decadence, the hatreds which it aroused, and its ultimate triumph are chapters in his life story. Weber is a child of the modern spirit. His inheritance is rich and deep. Behind him are the Russian folk artists whose work colored his childhood memories, the arts of the Orient and of primitive races which he learned to love as a boy, the great traditions of the antique and the Renaissance to which he responded as naturally as a plant responds to sunlight, and the magnificent researches of the giants of the Nineteenth Century.

In the late Nineteenth Century art became international. Everywhere in the western world native streams were enriched by the influx of immigrant ideas. The great tradition of Europe found itself anew through the arts of the East. America, with no great tradition of her own, stood at the crossroads of the world, receptive to influences from East and West. The strongest influence upon America, as always, was that of her mother, Europe, and it was Europe which beckoned Max Weber when he graduated from art school in 1900.

In those days Europe was not as close to America as it is today. The steamships made the trip in nearly the same time as now, it is true, but still Europe exerted no such gravitational pull as it does today when half a million of our people go abroad each year, and when the doings of European artists are registered in New York almost overnight. The vital contemporary ideas which the art of Europe had to offer were unknown in America in 1900, though they had been developing in the ateliers of France for more than thirty years. Unknown, but not altogether unknown, for similar ideas had taken root here in a few places. But of that later.

There was little in America to nourish the young artist in the early nineteen hundreds. American art had become shallow indeed. Paris and Munich had been sending back students filled with respect for the technique they had learned in the studios. On the one hand there were practitioners of the hard, tight, imitationist drawings of the Post-Leonardo academism which had reached the height of its virulence; on the other was a cult of the brush stroke as taught in Munich, where the technique of Courbet had been degraded into an academic trick. Barbizon and pleinairism still echoed in the academy. Alma Tadema's reconstructions of the antique were considered the last word in the grand manner. The portraits of Sargent were extolled as the best since Reynolds, while the portraits of Thomas Eakins were barely noticed. In the schools, with the exception of the Art Students' League, everything was brown. At the League, usually far ahead of the other schools, Twachtman was introducing something of the color of the Impressionists, but even at the League there was still no rumor of the heresies which had come after Impressionism.

The world of the big art schools was alien to Weber. The academicians whose reputations then awed America did not interest him, for he had been taught in a school where the slogans of the academy met no response. He got his training in the art classes of Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, the master of which was Arthur Wesley Dow, who did more than any other

man to put an end to the older methods of academic art teaching in America. Dow brought the great principles of Chinese and Japanese art into the curriculum of the American art school. He was a man of old New England stock who had studied in Europe for five years before returning to America in the 1890's, had gone through the routine of the Paris academies, and had even been at Pont Aven with Gauguin in 1887. Dow was not satisfied with the teaching of the schools and when he came back to America he turned to the arts of the Far East, seeking to fathom the wisdom of the great masters of China and Japan, and to find in their work an answer to the problems of art teaching. One of the collections which he studied was that of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and here he met Ernest Fenollosa, then curator of Japanese Art in the Museum.

Ernest Fenollosa was the first great American student of Oriental art. He was a New Englander, born in Salem of a Spanish father, and a mother whose ancestors were mariners and merchants who brought cargoes from the Far East to the wharves of Salem. When Fenollosa was graduated from Harvard in 1878, he was invited to Japan to become professor of political economy and philosophy, and later professor of aesthetics, at the University of Tokio. Fenollosa had studied art in the school of the Boston Museum. From his first year at Tokio, he became deeply interested in Far Eastern art and spent most of his leisure time in studying Chinese and Japanese painting and sculpture. During his summer vacations he would travel over Japan to see treasures in temples and in the homes of the nobles. In this fashion he became acquainted with all the leading art collections of Japan, and he deepened his knowledge through study with the Kano, Tosa, and Shijo masters, classical schools of Japan which were still in existence in the late Nineteenth Century. He did more than any other man to create a revival of interest in the old arts of Japan among the Japanese themselves. The Japanese government recognized his services and his great ability and conferred upon him honors and titles, among them that of Imperial Commissioner of Fine Arts.

Through his study of the works of the Chinese and Japanese masters, Fenollosa came to the conclusion that art is a kind of spatial music and he studied and criticized all art from that point of view. He saw that spatial existence and spatial relation are fundamental to plastic art. In his book, *The Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, he says: "The tentative effort of art expression in childhood and in primitive races has been in all ages and lands practically the same, and its keynote is spacing . . . a universal

scheme or logic of art unfolds which as easily subsumes all forms of Asiatic and of savage art and the efforts of children as it does accepted European schools. We find that all art is harmonious spacing."

Through Fenollosa the arts of China and Japan became the dominant factors in Dow's art teaching. Together the two men worked out series of lessons for students. The method was first tried in Boston, and was later put into practice by Dow at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. It was at Pratt Institute that Max Weber came under Dow's influence.

Weber was fitted by temperament and by the training of his youth to understand the teaching of Dow. He was born in Russia, at Bialyostok, in 1881. The earliest memories of his childhood were of Russian folk art, the religious processions with their painted ikons passing in the street, the Russian churches and shrines with their Byzantine color and decoration, and the synagogues with their curious carvings and paintings of lions and draperies, curtains and musical instruments—strange and moving like the paintings of Chirico. There were, too, the painted toys and utensils of the Russian folk artists, which he saw around him, and the rich stuffs of costumes and ceremonial dress which he had many opportunities to see, for his grandfather was a noted dyer and colorist, and was sought through all his native province to supervise the dyeing of cloths and silks. Weber was sensitive to color almost to the point of ecstasy, and things seen during his Russian childhood made a deep impression upon him.

When he was ten years old Max Weber came to America with his parents. They settled in Brooklyn, and Weber was sent to school there, graduating from primary school and from the Boys' High School. What interested him most throughout his school years were the studies in art, and he was always the best draughtsman in his class. When it became necessary for him to choose his life profession he chose art as a bird chooses flight, and entered the classes of Pratt Institute. He was just sixteen years old. The course at Pratt Institute was intended for teachers in the art and manual training classes of the public schools. For two years Weber studied drawing and composition, woodcarving, and clay modelling. One of the things which he learned was joinery, and this was an influence in reinforcing the teachings of Dow on the necessity for good construction as the basis of art. But the outstanding thing was Dow's teaching in design and art appreciation.

Dow believed that the time honored approach to painting through the copying of casts and models, and the imitation of historic styles, as it was

done in the art schools, led to a mere gathering of facts with little power to use them. To him Academic teaching was empty formalism and meaningless exercise, and he often said that most painting in America was mere picture writing which had no connection with art. He directed the thought of his students first of all to design, and strove to awaken a sense of power and to point out ways to control it. His teaching has been a strong influence in the development of modern art education in America. It has had a great deal to do with the abandonment of naturalism as an ideal, the more daring use of color, and the acceptance of distortion—which is just a frank approach to form and structure—as a legitimate element in design.

To Max Weber, Dow's teaching was an inspiration, and even today, after thirty years of study and struggles he considers it the most important influence upon his life work. Dow spoke of the noble simplicities of art in a simple and understandable way and turned his students toward a study of the great art of the Far East and of the masters of the European tradition. He would come into class and make an unbounded drawing of trees and hills, or perhaps a winding road against the sky. Then he would ask the class to copy the drawing freely and to enclose it in a rectangle, to make a horizontal picture or a vertical, as they chose, and to make whatever changes necessary to fit the drawing to the frame which they had selected, to balance the drawing by making less foreground, or more sky, to change the masses, and what not. He would then criticize the studies, emphasizing good design. Later the students would make similar studies in several colors, always giving first consideration to spatial organization and distribution of light and dark masses. When he had his pupils copy pictures, he would ask them not to copy naturalistically, but to make a drawing of the outlines of the composition, and a notation of the color in washes.

Dow impressed the idea of ordered and unified spatial relations upon his pupils, through classroom exercises and through talks on art which he gave them, pointing out these qualities in the work of the masters of Europe and the Far East. He brought prints by Utamaro, Hiroshige, Hokusai, and Korin into his class, and fine reproductions of the works of masters of the Renaissance. To a group of the more advanced students, of whom Weber was one, he gave intimate talks on the history of art, and showed them lantern slides of great works of art the world over, the paintings and the architecture of the Renaissance, the work of the Italian primitives, Gothic architecture and sculpture, and the painting, sculpture, and architecture of the Far East.

He often said that what he tried to do was to bring the minds of his students in touch with the superior minds of past and present. Among the artists of his time he particularly admired Whistler and Manet, and he invariably sent his classes to the Metropolitan to study and copy Manet's "Boy with a Sword."

At the end of the two-year course Weber won a scholarship which gave him another year at Pratt. During this year he devoted himself to a more thorough study of Dow's principles. Outside the classroom he studied the masterpieces in the Metropolitan Museum and made copies of works by Velasquez and Corot. Toward the end of the year he was asked to make a series of drawings of paleontological specimens for Prof. W. B. Scott of Princeton. The remarkable quality of these drawings was commented upon by his instructors. At the end of his course he had become a masterly draughtsman and had a thorough grounding in design, but he felt that he was only beginning his research. His eyes turned toward France, but he was too poor for that. So he took up art teaching with the idea of saving his money for a period of study in Europe.

Almost immediately after his graduation he was appointed teacher of construction drawing and manual training in the public schools of Lynchburg, Virginia. The superintendent of schools in Lynchburg was a Mr. Glass, brother to Senator Carter Glass. He recognized Weber's ability and invited him to teach at the summer school of the University of Virginia. Weber taught at Lynchburg and at the University of Virginia for two years, and then, through a professor whom he met at the University, he was made head of the department of drawing and manual training at the State Normal School at Duluth, Minnesota. His spare time he spent in drawing and painting. His only pleasure was in the holidays when he could go out on painting trips. At the end of two years in Duluth he had saved enough money for a period of study in Europe. He sailed for France in October, 1905.

On the ship Weber met a student who was going to study at the Julian Academy. That was where most American art students in Paris were then going. Weber's new acquaintance assured him that it was the best place to study, and Weber became convinced that there was still something to be had from the traditional French schools from which the noble line of Ingres had not been altogether extirpated. If there was nothing else, there was discipline, which taught an artist how to direct his energies to a purpose. He registered for a year at the Julian Academy, and began drawing the figure under that stern old academician, Jean Paul Laurens. At first he was put to drawing parts of the figure, and later the whole figure. Laurens was a veritable Hindenburg of those militarists of drawing of the Beaux Arts, and with him Weber had several months drill in the hard, cold, photographic, and mechanical work which was characteristic of the French academic schools. Weber's draughtsmanship was so good that he attracted the attention of the old drillmaster, who would often stop before the young American's work and say: "Tres bon." He asked Weber where he came from and what he had studied and drawn before.

Aside from his studies this early period in Paris was a lonely time for Weber. He had few friends. But as time went on he met a number of kindred spirits, among them Elie Nadelman, a young Polish student who later became an American citizen, and Joseph Brummer, then a sculpture student but now a dealer in the antique in New York. With these friends and a few other students, American and European, Weber began to feel more at home in Paris. The young men discussed the ideas which were then beginning to make themselves felt in the studios, and the heresies which had not found their way into the academies. There was a ferment of new ideas in Paris, and the young students took such ideas as they could and used them for their development.

After four months at the Julian Academy a serious injury to his right hand forced Weber to give up the life class for a time. In the interval he haunted the museums, studying the European masters in the Louvre, the arts of the Orient in the Musee Guimet, and strange objects from France's colonial empire in Africa which were displayed in the Trocadero. Best of all he liked to study the art of the primitive peoples, and the archaic, the sculptures of Egypt and Assyria, the great simple things which have come down to us in wood and stone from the past. He spent whole days in the basement of the Louvre where the collections of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Greek sculpture are housed. In these works he found the lesson in consistency and

thoroughness of execution and an emotional force and grandeur for which he felt the painter must strive. Much of Weber's love of art goes to sculpture, an art which he first studied at Pratt Institute.

When his hand was well he returned to the Julian Academy. The old militarist, Jean Paul Laurens, discovered a new spirit in Weber's work. What the young student had learned from the archaic sculptures of Greece and the art of the Assyrians and the Egyptians had crept into his studies at the academy. The spirit of research which Weber has evinced all his life, was beginning to bear fruit. Laurens was interested and curious but he did not like this new work. It was not sufficiently polished for the academy, and it showed that Weber had been delving into the uses of exaggeration and distortion.

"It's solid—like an ox," he said.

Laurens thought that Weber had gone astray from the path of art, when what he had really done was to go back to the birth-giving sources of art itself. It was the old clash between the academician who thinks he understands the work of the past and leans unthinkingly upon it, and the student who really loves and studies it for what it can teach him about his own time. As Weber himself has said: "Anyone devoted to art in its highest and noblest form is continually drawn to the study and adoration of the antique. The eternal spirit, the very essence and flower of the human soul, seems to be embedded in the antique. The student painter and sculptor through such devotion and ardor is imbued with the hope of endowing his own work with enduring and vital qualities such as inhere in the great and permanent works of art. The path for the future is lighted with a constant hope to emulate and to contribute.

"Yet there are many who think they understand the fundamental aesthetic principles of the antique, when in reality they do not. These principles are as subtle and refined as they are tangible and concrete. They defy definition.

"Tradition is a stumbling block unless one knows how to use it. . . . Instead of studying or feeling the spirit of the ancients through their art—only their means by some are used. Many have dressed themselves in robes that fit them neither in form nor in color. Expression pre-ordains its own means. It is the emotion, the inspiration, that stirs the individual creator, or an entire race, before its expression. Emotion cannot be sustained in the individual, and this is as true of an entire people. In the beginning of emotion, intellectual intensity is expressed with ardor and devotion—later it

cools and whole races or groups are found busy practicing, either through stupidity or through boredom, the means that no more fit the spirit, if spirit it is. This is the history of academism. . . .

"In the history of art we may find whole periods or epochs when spirit was bankrupt, and when leather was distributed for gold."

Weber continued for a little while in the academy, but he was not interested any more in what Laurens had to say. His one effort at this time was to free himself from the technical cleverness which he had learned in the schools. He felt that he would rather stammer a new truth than glibly repeat an outgrown convention, no matter how highly polished. Doubts of the authentic apostolic succession of the French academies which had been lurking in Weber's mind grew into certainty. A few weeks after his return he decided that he had better carry on his researches alone, and see how the teaching of the schools checked up with the work of the masters upon which, ostensibly, it was based. He found little in the work of the schools which related to the works of Rembrandt, Poussin, Chardin, and the great Italians of the Renaissance, and almost nothing which carried on the tradition of the artists who interested him most at the time—El Greco, Goya, and the Italian primitives. He could not study the work of these men in the Louvre as he wanted to study it, and in the summer of 1906 he decided on a trip to Spain and Italy. El Greco was the man he wanted most to study, so he went first to Madrid where he spent two months, nearly all of it in the basement, the halls, and the corridors of the Prado where the work of El Greco and Goya was kept.

Weber learned to know the work of these great artists intimately and saw their profound influence on the more recent developments of art in France, the influence of Goya on Daumier and Manet, and of El Greco on the later moderns. He became convinced that academic art had gone astray with its deadly photographic imitation of local form and color, that its plastic methods were futile and its subject matter insipid.

The summer was over when he had completed his studies in Spain, and he had to postpone his Italian trip until the next year. During the winter of 1906 he continued his studies in Paris. In March, 1907, he left Paris for Italy, going to Rome, Naples, Florence, Pisa, and Venice. He went unerringly to what he wanted to see, for his studies in art appreciation under Dow had taught him what to look for among the monuments of the Renaissance. "I can remember," he says, "when I arrived in Florence. It was four

o'clock in the morning, in that hour just before dawn when everything is still. I was tired from my long trip but I could not bear the thought of going to a hotel at once. I left my bags at the station and went immediately to look at the Duomo and Giotto's tower, about ten minutes' walk from the station. I was alone except for a few early morning worshippers in the Duomo. It all looked strangely beautiful in the light of early dawn, but it was not strange to me for I had met it in Arthur Dow's class in Brooklyn. 'There it is,' I said, and I opened my arms to it as to a dear friend who had come back after years of absence. I stood before Giotto's tower following the rhythmic flow and balance of the masses, the sweep of line, my eyes lingering on its colored marble, on the lovely detail, its beautiful proportions and the grand composition of the whole, which I had drawn from pictures, so many times. I looked at the bronze doors of Pisano in the Duomo and at the paintings of Castagno. It was hours before I thought of breakfast."

Weber stayed in Italy for five months, studying the primitives and the masters of the Renaissance. After his study of Giotto he became deeply interested in Masaccio, and in Piero della Francesca. In the profound detachment and stillness of Francesca he found a quality akin to that of the great Chinese whose works had fascinated him. He studied the paintings of Signorelli and Mantegna with the greatest interest. Paintings by Titian he had seen in Paris and Madrid, but in Venice and in Florence he saw the full range of this great master's work. Giorgione, that supreme poet of the European tradition in painting, Tintoretto, and Veronese, he studied in Venice. Sculpture drew Weber almost as much as painting. He studied the work of Donatello, Michelangelo, and Della Robbia; Pompeiian sculpture in Naples, Tanagra figurines, and the sculptures of the Ludovisi throne in Rome. He filled notebook after notebook with drawings made in museums, but his painting during this period was done from nature, landscapes and urban scenes, most of them, painted in Venice and in Anticoli-Corrado.

Weber came away from Spain and Italy humble before the old masters, but rich in that humility, feeling that he had got hold of something to build on for the future. He had not gone back to the Julian Academy when he returned from Spain in the autumn of 1906, but had gone instead to sketch classes at the Academy Colarossi and the Academy de la Grande Chaumiere, where he painted from the model but took no criticism from the instructor. He continued with this regime in 1907. At that time Matisse often worked from the model at the Grande Chaumiere.

El Greco and Cezanne were the painters with whose work Weber was

most in sympathy at the time, but he was also deeply interested in the work of the younger artists of Paris. Following their studies of Cezanne and the art of the Orient and of primitive peoples, a group of young painters were then beginning to make departures which astonished Paris with their audacity. Persian and Rajput painting, which are stylistically arts of water color, or at least of a flowing medium, had taught Matisse and a group of other men to introduce a boldness and freedom of color, and a subtlety of line and pattern which were unknown to the stodgier academic technique. Picasso and Braque were beginning the researches which led to their later developments. In the light of Cezanne and of primitive art they were beginning to depart from attempts to copy the superficial appearances of objects, which the academicians call "nature," and were preparing for their ventures into forms of expression which dissected, dissociated, and distorted the conventionally accepted appearance of nature in a way which seemed to the academicians to cut off all connection between the painting and the external world. Picasso and the Cubists had not yet plunged into their boldest and most experimental studies. They were waiting for the impetus of African art. On all sides painters were ferreting out everything in art which would help them get down to first principles. They accepted any suggestion which was germane to their purpose, no matter whence it came. Because of this, modern art has been called eclectic, but its eclecticism has been no shallow acceptance of whatever came along, but a real search for fundamentals. The pulses of European art were quickened with the life-blood of new ideas and of old ideas reborn.

"An eclecticism peculiar to modern civilization produced this modern-art child which happened to be born in the city of Paris," says Max Weber. "Its genealogy is Italian, Spanish, Oriental, primitive. The origin of Pointillism may be traced to the Italian or Byzantine mosaics, and Impressionism is merely a more blurred or disintegrated application of that same principle. Post-Impressionism is an adaptation of the treatment of color-mass and simplicity found in Peruvian, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Hindu, and Russian decorative painting, and in the last analysis is but a bolder and broader Impressionism. The grey tints are derived from Cezanne and the simplification of form is derived from African, Mexican, and other primitive sculpture; and the general character and tendency is medieval and archaic. What is there particularly modern in a Cubist painting? Its very logic, its plan, is Euclidean.

"Modern art is as old as the oldest art. It goes to the birth-giving source

for its idea. It is a rejuvenation and a cleansing after the period of academies whose ideals are no more than the acquisition of technical skill which is mere penmanship."

Max Weber early became identified with the new movement. At the Academy he had met Lucien Mainssieux a nephew of Jules Flandrin. Flandrin was of the group of Matisse, Maurice Denis, and Marquet, who had studied under Gustave Moreau. He was a painter of reputation and was known as a man who was kind and helpful to the younger painters. Through this nephew Weber made the acquaintance of Flandrin and Madame Marval. During the winter of 1906 Weber's growing enthusiasm for what was being done by the advanced men in Paris was fed by his contact with Flandrin and Madame Marval. With these two, who became his firm friends, Weber found an association which gave him rare opportunities to come into close touch with the best that France had to offer. He spent most of his evenings in the atelier of Flandrin, and as he looks back upon his life in Paris he considers that the two greatest influences on his life there were Flandrin and Rousseau. Flandrin knew the work of Cezanne thoroughly, and through him Weber came into contact with the men who were struggling for the ideals which were the heritage of Cezanne.

Weber had been prepared to understand these men and their research by his early teaching under Arthur Dow. He knew the fundamental nature of their quest and so was not condemned to waste his time in a mere sterile acquisition of new technical devices to succeed the devices of the academy as did so many others who came under the influence of the modern movement. He knew already that the key to a work of art lay in its solution of space problems, and he was aware of the major errors which 19th Century academism had made about the art of painting. These errors are two: First, that the aim of painting is the imitation of nature. The falseness of this assumption, which has always been evident to the greatest artists, received its complete exposure with the perfection of photography. Second, that a set of conventions for copying the appearances of local form and local color, is a reflection of nature, and not simply one of many ways of handling a medium.

The first of these errors led to an orgy of imitation which forgot art values in an attempt to arrive at a sort of picture writing. The second led to attempts to perfect the set of conventions in which it was supposed that nature was reflected. And here an infinite regression seems possible. The conventions which had satisfied the academicians and the early romantics

did not satisfy the Impressionists. They evolved a new way of getting closer to the facts of nature through hints which they got from science and from the works of older painters. This new way was their method of discontinuity in applying color in which a tone is built up by juxtaposed spots of pigment. The critics of this method have pointed out that at its extreme it becomes an attempt—and a not altogether successful one—to catch the effects of light on surfaces. The strongest of the Impressionists never carried their ideas to the logical absurdity to which they were carried by their followers. In Renoir the method achieved a glowing color orchestration through the use of interharmonized tints, and in Seurat it was a means for controlling the lighting of forms, the forms themselves being stated as severely as in an Egyptian relief.

The search of the more advanced men in Paris was the same as Weber's own, and he immediately hailed it and prepared to learn as much as he could from these adventurous spirits. What delighted him especially in their work was their emphasis on the spatial value of color, the poignant realization of space which color construction gives to painting, and their use of pure color as promulgated by Matisse. Dow had prepared him to understand this too, but he was not a colorist himself—for colorists, like poets, are born, not made. But here Weber was prepared by nature and by his early environment, for he is a born colorist and in his childhood had been thrilled by Russian art with its Oriental warmth and brilliance of color.

It has been remarked that Russian folk artists have not been surpassed in Europe in the use of color as design, and Weber showed, even in his earliest paintings, a rare undestanding of color. One of the keenest students of this use of color, the Frenchman, Albert Gleizes, when he saw a group of Weber's gouache paintings, recognized that Weber must be Russian in origin.

"Oui, c'est le Russe," he said.

Weber was drawn at once to the way Matisse and the *Fauves* used color, and he was swept off his feet by the paintings of Cezanne. The work of these men made him conscious of color as a constructional element in the making of a picture. For the rest, the understanding of space problems, the appreciation of the arts of China and Japan, of primitive peoples, savages, and children, Weber had had all that from his first teacher. The Frenchmen saw Chinese art first of all as decorative, and took that side of it for their work. Fenollosa, whose principles had guided Weber's early studies, had seen that Far Eastern art was not decorative, but that it was primarily an

art of space relations, subtle, refined, and profound beyond anything the western world had yet produced; an art which, like the eyes of a Kuan-Yin, can "see and lift invisible horizons."

Cezanne died in 1906, and in that year Weber saw a number of his works in the Salon d'Automne. "As soon as I saw them," Weber says, "they gripped me at once and forever. I began to paint with the palette knife, and to handle the brush as a tool, not as one would hold a pen, to get solidity."

What interested the thoughtful young students in Paris most at that time was Cezanne's endeavor to convert Impressionism into something more solid and durable, to achieve an order as firm and satisfying as that of the painters of the Renaissance, and to achieve that order, not as the Impressionists had tried to get it, but to get it with color construction, mixed tones, outlines, diffused contours, and distortions where need be—in short, to put over the physical eye which delights in the fleeting aspects of nature the discipline of the inner eye which could take these aspects and make of them something as solid as the work in the museums.

In 1907 came the retrospective exhibition of Cezanne at the Petit Palais, with eighty or ninety canvases on view. Weber spent whole days at this exhibition, discussing it endlessly with Flandrin and with his student friends. He haunted the galleries of the dealers where the work of Cezanne might be seen. There was the shop of Ambroise Vollard at 17 Rue Lafitte, where young painters were made welcome and where they might study the work of Cezanne by the hour. The gallery of Bernheim Jeune had a big Cezanne collection, with whole walls devoted to the works of the recluse of Aix. There was much in Paris for a young painter to see and study, the museums for the work of the masters of the past, and the Salon d'Automne, the dealers' galleries, and private collections for the works of Cezanne and the bolder contemporaries, such as Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Derain, and others.

It was in 1906 that Weber first became acquainted with Henri Rousseau. Flandrin had shown him a picture of the Douanier's and called it good, but could offer no definite idea of what Rousseau was getting at. Later Weber met Rousseau at the home of another painter friend, Robert Delaunay. At the same gathering were a number of other painters, including Jean Metzinger, who later became a member of the Cubist advance guard, and the American, Samuel Halpert. There grew up between Weber and Rousseau the rarest of friendships, and since they both lived in the same

quarter of Paris, behind the Gare Montparnasse, they saw much of each other. Weber found in Rousseau's work an innocence and purity of vision, a simplicity and fearlessness of expression which won him at once. He felt that it had an intimacy with the life of nature rarely equalled even by the greatest artists. He saw in it an expression of the love of order which is in all great art, a rare sense of color, and a highly personal method of minute execution of details which reminded him of Breughel and the primitives.

Rousseau was a small man, ruddy-faced and healthy, childlike in the abandon of his gayety and his laughter; childlike, too, in his moods of contemplation and depression, and in his sentimental attachments.

"I don't remember that I ever saw him angry," says Weber. "When anything pleased him he would express his pleasure with simple heartiness. When he was well satisfied with a landscape he had painted he would stand before it and exclaim: 'What a lovely tree! That's nature.' And he would be as happy as a child."

As a boy of seventeen, Rousseau had been a musician in the French army and had seen service in the campaign with Maximilian in Mexico. He recorded in his paintings scenes of the Mexican jungle with its lush vegetation and wild animals vaguely remembered and pieced out with drawings of animals and foliage which he found in dictionaries, in the landscapes of the Parisian suburbs, and in the Jardin des Plantes, where he went regularly to sketch. He was always very poor. A cup of coffee in a cafe was to him an occasion for celebration. He lived in one room which served him as studio, art gallery, concert hall, dining room, kitchen and bedroom, and eked out his meagre living with a government pension and with violin and drawing lessons which he gave to the neighbors' children. In his room everything was put on one table—his dishes, paints, palette, brushes, and even his violin. The walls were covered with his pictures, from floor to ceiling. He would consult his friends about the prices he ought to ask for these pictures, but though his prices were often as low as five francs buyers were very few.

One day he read in a newspaper that the Mexican ambassador had returned to Paris from somewhere or other. "I will go and see him," he confided to Weber. "He will understand my pictures. In Mexico they have lots of jungle." With Weber he went to the hotel in the Place Vendome where the ambassador lived. Rousseau went into the hotel while Weber paced up and down outside. After half an hour, Rousseau came back. "The news-

paper was wrong," he said. "The ambassador is not in Paris." He did not try again. What a lost opportunity for the Mexican ambassador!

Rousseau's understanding of art was as naive and personal as his paintings. He liked mostly sentimental pictures, and did not care at all for the works of the *Fauves*. When he saw their paintings he would walk away shrugging his shoulders, saying nothing. He liked Cezanne's work but was a bit critical of it. When he saw the large painting of bathers in the retrospective exhibition at the Petit Palais he studied it for some time and then said to Weber: "My, that's a good picture! If I could only have it at home for a while, I could finish it up nicely." He thought the exhibition was good. "A good man, this Cezanne," he said. "A good painter. Still, it's curious, I don't see as much violet in nature as he does."

Rousseau did not approve of Weber's research in the newer forms of expression, but he approved of his more naturalistic drawings, especially street scenes. He expressed this approval by asking Weber to exchange with him for two pictures. Later Weber bought four more of the Douanier's paintings, and this small collection he has never parted with. Rousseau was not affected by the work of his contemporaries, nor was he affected by the work of the past for the very good reason that he had not seen it.

"I never knew of him going to the Louvre," says Weber, "nor did I ever hear him speak of it. One day I saw him working on a big jungle picture, and I exclaimed: 'Why, you work like Giotto!' 'Qui est Giotto?' he asked, in perfect innocence."

During 1907 Weber continued with his studies in the museums and in the dealers' galleries, and painted from the model in the Colarossi and Grande Chaumiere academies. One of the students at the Colarossi helped Weber to his next step, his study under Matisse. This was a German student who, like Weber, painted from the model but took no criticisms. The German saw in Weber's studies that he had come under the influence of the new ideas. He knew Matisse, and he proposed to Weber that they help organize a Matisse class. Weber was familiar with Matisse's work. He agreed. The class was organized in the fall of 1907. There were eight pupils.

Weber was attracted to Matisse primarily by his gift as a colorist, his remarkable virtuosity in making new and vivid harmonies with pure colors which in the hands of less gifted painters would have been vulgar or merely commonplace. In Matisse's insistence upon simplification of drawing and

swiftness of statement, and freeing the drawing of all trivialities, he found an antidote for the tight and pedestrian restrictions of the academies.

Matisse's work at that time had not won any of the popularity which has since come to it, and in the Matisse class Weber was plunged into the controversies which have raged around modern art for nearly a quarter of a century. He was a fighter for modern art from its very beginnings in Paris. Weber knew that his teacher was following, in his own way, along the path of logical construction and spatial organization which Dow had pointed out in the work of the Chinese and the primitives. But he heard the pundits of the art world call his severely logical teacher an apostle of irrationality and disorder, and even insane. The assaults of the unknowing and the stupid did not affect Weber, except to make him all the more determined to follow his own course and not to yield to the clamors of art politicians and the ignorant.

In the Matisse class Weber clarified in practice many of the ideas which had occupied him since his first studies in America. Matisse insisted on sound construction, that every inch of the canvas be alive and right in value and color harmony, and that the furthest point of the rectangle be considered as important, from the point of view of the whole, as any other part of the canvas. This was the heart of Matisse's teaching. In the use of color Matisse taught greater freedom and boldness, and a personal transposition of local color. Though Matisse stressed simplification of drawing and rapidity of statement, he also insisted on a rigid discipline in draughtsmanship. "Sometimes," said Weber, "we used to draw like cameras, using plumb lines, but to purposes other than the mechanical and futile constructions of the academicians." The class drew and painted from life and made many excursions out of the ordinary ruts of art school accessories for models. They bought a Fifth Century Apollo, among other things, and this they drew and painted, in all its aspects.

As early as 1906 Weber began exhibiting in the Salon d'Automne, and at the Independants. In 1908 his work at the Salon was favorably noticed by the critics who were beginning to see what the modern men were driving at. *La Revue Moderne* said of it: "M. Max Weber voudrait sans doute mettre toute l'Italie en peinture . . . et cela serait fort agreable. Ses envois (1709-1717) ont des qualites qui permettront de ne point les oublier." The Salon d'Automne in that year did something which has ever since been a source of sure-fire publicity for art shows, and which put the stodgy National Academy on the front pages of New York papers as late as 1929.

It hung one of Weber's canvases upside down. This led to articles in th French papers which were picked up in America. The New York Tim of October 11th, 1908, reported the incident and added that Weber w showing in the Salon "several pictures of an ultra-modern variety, most sketches from the nude." This was the first public notice of Weber's wo in America.

Things were moving very fast in the art world of Paris. In 1908 fre excitement came with the retrospective exhibition of Gauguin at the Pe Palais, and many artists began considering the influence which primiti and savage art might have upon the productions of the Twentieth Centur Since 1907 Negro sculpture had been a topic of excited discussion amor many painters in Paris. The man who responded earliest to this Negro a was Picasso. He found in the carved fetishes of Africa effects similar to tho he had been seeking under the influence of the teaching of Cezanne; th is, he wanted to analyze objects in nature into design elements, using the elements as building blocks for new combinations of forms. Picasso fir used the teaching of Cezanne and the example of Negro art to enhance th spatial and structural values and the emotional significance of paintin which still acknowledged a recognizable relation to a model. This was th stage of his research between 1907 and 1909. Later he cast aside repr sentation altogether, but returned to it again. The results which Picas achieved under the influence of African sculpture were even more shockin to the academic circles in Paris than the work of the *Fauves*, but Weber an other artists who had been concerned with problems similar to those upo which Picasso was working at once hailed this new work as a significa step in the research of modern art.

Primitive and savage art had always interested Weber. He felt, to that it was in harmony with the teachings of Matisse, for Weber had hea Matisse say that he was trying to recapture the fresh vision of the primitiv and of childhood when all the world is new. Often in the Matisse cla Weber would speak of the childlike art of Henri Rousseau.

"Max Weber, extolling the art of the Douanier, stirred up the Ac demie Matisse," says Adolph Basler. "While he was able to make th majority of the pupils share his passionate conviction, the master on th other hand remained indifferent if not hostile to this ingenuous painting.

Weber remained with the Matisse class until August, 1908. In th fall of that year he went to Brussels, Antwerp, Bruges, Rotterdam, an Amsterdam to study the art of the Low Countries, especially the paintin

of Van Eyck, Memling, Vermeer, and Rembrandt. When he returned to Paris he went back once more to his former plan of studying by himself. The artists who interested him most at this time, beside Cezanne and Rousseau, were Picasso and Braque. During this period Weber saw a great deal of his friend, the Douanier, to whose house came many of the men who later formed the Cubist advance guard, and the writers who defended and explained their art, such men as Guillaume Apollinaire and Adolph Basler. Other frequent visitors at Rousseau's place were Joseph Brummer, and the American artists, Samuel Halpert and Michael Brenner.

Weber had made the acquaintance of Picasso in 1907 through Flandrin's nephew, and he at once talked to the Spaniard of the Douanier and his work. "I well remember Picasso's first meeting with Rousseau," says Weber. "When Picasso came to my studio one day I asked him whether he would not like to walk over to the Rue Perrel. We found Rousseau painting on the portrait of Apollinaire and his Muse. The length of one of the arms of Apollinaire's Muse, in the portrait at that stage, was prodigious. I could see that Picasso was interested in Rousseau's work, but like the thorough student that he is he had no ready-made opinion of it, even of that enormous arm. Apollinaire's sitting was concluded shortly after our arrival and then we all went to a cafe to the great pleasure of Rousseau. He delighted in these little social occasions, and sat all through the evening without a word, sipping his coffee, perfectly content, while Apollinaire's great voice contended for mastery with a nickelodeon."

"It was with Max Weber," says Adolph Basler, in his book on Rousseau, "that I used to go occasionally to the soirees in the Rue Perrel. This American, a tenor who apparently had sung in synagogues, was the great soloist of these familiar parties in which artists rubbed elbows with the people of the *faubourg*. One observed among the guests the baker's wife with her daughter, who took lessons on the mandolin from the Douanier; the little corner grocer, and beside him his son to whom Rousseau taught the violin and drawing; the milkman's daughters; clerks; a few pensioned customs employees and some old near-maniacs who passed their days painting alongside their amiable master."

In the entertainment at these soirees everyone took part. There would be songs and recitations by the grocer's boy and the little milk-woman, violin selections by Rousseau who played sentimental airs with a curiously personal technique, and songs by Max Weber who was the star soloist of Rousseau's parties.

This idyllic life in Paris had to come to a close, for idyllic it was in spit of poverty, a constant struggle with the problems of painting, and th contempt of the official art world. The slender savings which Weber ha amassed in his four years of art teaching in Lynchburg and Duluth wer giving out. He had to go back to America. His friend Rousseau was ver sad at Weber's going away, but he decided that there must be a farewe party. He got up a program, neatly typed, with the advertisement of M Henri Rousseau, teacher of violin and drawing, on the back. All the neigh bors were invited. The program began with the Marseillaise played b an orchestra of Rousseau's pupils, and ended with a group of French vaude ville ballads sung by the Douanier himself.

Weber left Paris for America on December 21, 1908, leaving behin him associations which he loved, and a life immensely stimulating to hir as an artist. He had made up his mind to earn some money in America perhaps to sell enough pictures in his first show to enable him to retur the next year. Before he went away he took his household effects to the Ru Perrel and gave them to the Douanier. Out of all his belongings he kep only a cane, and that more as a memento of Rousseau who used often t borrow it for promenades. Rousseau went to the Gare St. Lazare to see hir off. The two talked of Weber's return to France as they waited for the trai to start. Rousseau, who had learned not to expect too much from life, wa a little doubtful, but he wanted to believe that his friend would come back

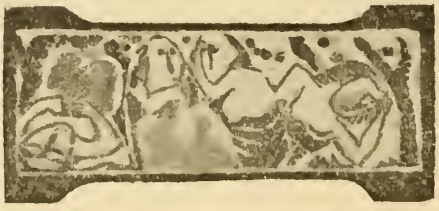
"Anyway," he said, "if you do not come back soon send me you photograph and I will paint your portrait."

"Oh, I'll be back next autumn, no fear."

The guards were closing the doors of the train. Rousseau wanted t leave his young friend with an appropriate farewell, with some word of h regard for him, some message as to a son going out into strange lands. Th dear old soul had been troubled by Weber's research in the problems o abstract art. He believed that the artist must never desert nature.

"Weber!" he cried as the train began to move. "Weber! N'oublie pas la nature!"

Weber never saw him again.



The America to which Weber returned was an aesthetic desert. The Academy had already developed that hardening of the arteries which has accompanied its rapid progress to senile decay in the past twenty years. There was no room for new blood in the veins of the old Academy, and there was little room elsewhere. The young painter then faced conditions very different from those of today. There were no exhibition societies like the Independent, or the Salons of America. The idea of no-jury group shows had not yet been put into practice, though it was being discussed by the artists and students who gathered about Robert Henri. The dealers' galleries which have since come into existence to show modern art were still unborn. Here and there was a small gallery that might, for a consideration, rent its rooms to a painter who had subscribed to the heresies of Post-Impressionism. But the critics and the public had scant respect for such exhibitions. The only places where art was respected by the public was in galleries where academicians showed, and in the big official exhibitions at the National Academy and in museums, which were completely dominated by dismal prize-winning, prize-bestowing cliques.

Weber had been lonely when he first went to France. He was lonelier here. There he had shown in the Independant Salon and had been invited to the Salon d'Automne. Here every door was closed. The only door which might have been open, that of Alfred Stieglitz, who had a little gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue, was unknown to Weber, for 291's interest in modern art was then very recent. Weber's chance to exhibit came through a painter friend, who knew of a small gallery in the basement of a picture-frame shop. This was the Haas Gallery, on Madison Avenue near 60th Street, and here Weber had his first show in America, April 22nd to May 8th, 1909.

The Haas Gallery show ushered in the most vivid and exciting of American art epochs. It showed America the living influence of the masters whose work had most powerfully affected Western art in the Nineteenth Century. It was a trumpet sounding in the arena of American art, but few men, least of all the academicians, knew what it meant. Time, the censor that keeps the work of charlatans from the great arches of the future, had closed the door upon an era. A new period was about to begin.

"One day when the sky was serene and clear," says Plutarch in his life of Sulla, "there was heard in it the sound of a trumpet, so shrill and mournful that it frightened and astonished the whole city. The Tuscan sages said it portended a new race of men, and a renovation of the world,

for they observed that there were eight several kinds of men, all differing in life and manners; that heaven had allotted to each its time, which was limited by the circuit of the great year; and that when one race came to a period, and another was rising, it was announced by some wonderful sign from either earth or heaven. So that it was evident at one view to those who attended to these things, and were versed in them, that a different sort of men was come into the world. . . ."

There were few sages in America who knew how to read the meaning of the first Weber exhibit, and America was not prepared to listen to them. The only show of modern work which had preceded Weber in New York was that of his former teacher, Henri Matisse, at Stieglitz' 291 Gallery, where some of Matisse's drawings and lithographs had been shown in the winter of 1908. These had been accepted very gingerly, even by the advanced spirits, for not many understood what the *Fauves* were driving at. The great interest which Americans feel in almost any sort of foreign art brought crowds of curiosity seekers to the Matisse show. With Weber it was different. His show was too strange in America to be really shocking. The critics did not know exactly what to do about it, and neither did the painters. Most of the painters were solidly academic. The radical artists in those days were the "Eight"—Robert Henri, Arthur B. Davies, Maurice Prendergast, John Sloan, George Luks, William J. Glackens, Everett Shinn, and Ernest Lawson. They had shown together for the first time in 1908 and had been anathematized as the "revolutionary black gang." This group later played an important role in the first movements for an open forum in art and in the organization of no-jury exhibitions, especially in the first "Independent" of 1910, the Armory Show of 1913, and the present Society of Independent Artists which was organized in 1917.

In 1909 the Henri group was the last word in rebellion. The challenge of modernism had not then become clear to the academicians, and they could not easily turn their guns from the threatening "Eight" to this newcomer. The critics were inclined to be amused rather than shocked. Some of them passed the show by without a word. Others patronized it as crude in conception and execution, and said that if the young painter would forget about Paris and do some studying in the right schools he might get into the Academy some day. A few of the more discerning saw Weber's remarkable gift of color, but that was as far as they would go. The show at the Haas Gallery had one important result. Arthur B. Davies visited it and bought two pictures.

After the Haas Gallery exhibition Weber became acquainted with Alfred Stieglitz, who had heard of his work in Paris the previous year. Stieglitz invited him to show his work at 291, and in March, 1910, Weber exhibited with a group of artists among whom were John Marin, Alfred H. Maurer, Arthur Dove, and Marsden Hartley. As before, his work baffled the critics. James Huneker, considered at that time a knowing judge of art values, said: "We know that Cezanne reduced all forms to the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder, and this study [Weber's "Summer"] viewed as such, reveals plenty of cleverness and research. In the meantime the picture has vanished, like the old saying at the hospital, the operation was successful but the patient died." Huneker as late as 1915 confessed his inability to see Weber's work, though he thought that Weber was an "expressive draftsman."

In 1910 Rousseau died. Weber felt that something must be done in America to honor the memory of his friend. "It was Weber who first sang the hymn to Rousseau in America," wrote Alfred Stieglitz. "Weber's daily songs were: 'Cezanne, cet homme', followed by 'Rousseau, cet ange.' And Weber sang them with all his passion." In September, 1910, Weber arranged at 291 the first Rousseau exhibition in America. It consisted of six small paintings which Weber owned, and a group of delightful small drawings. The only result of this exhibition, so far as the critics were concerned, was to confirm their earlier judgment upon Weber. A man who could admire such work as Rousseau had turned out seemed to them a misguided artist indeed.

Weber did not feel the full weight of the critics' disapproval until 1911, when he had a "one man show" at the 291 gallery. Great crowds came to see it. The issue of modern art had come up more sharply then. Rumors of the furore caused by the first Post-Impressionist show in London had reached New York and old hats began to sit uneasily. Weber's work was attacked forthwith. The young painter had been prepared for misunderstanding, but he was wholly unprepared for the hurricane of vituperation and abuse which the show brought down upon him. One critic called the show "a brutal, vulgar, and unnecessary display of art license." The critic of the New York Globe said that it was "difficult to write of these atrocities with moderation, for they are positively an insult to ordinary intelligence." The American Art News denied the name of art to Weber's work, and found fresh cause for astonishment that even so wrong-headed a painter as he was "an admirer of Henri Rousseau and says that he is proud to be

the owner of the curious productions of the dead man, recently shown in this gallery." The critic of the New York Post said: "We had suggested that the exhibition of the Post-Impressionists, which caused such a sensation in London, should be brought here, so that all New Yorkers could learn something about what was moving in the air of art of the European continent. We are content now that the collection shall remain abroad, for Max Weber's pictures are said to be a good example of what a Post-Impressionist exhibition should be."

Weber took a mean advantage of the critics by including a school drawing of his in the exhibit, and not one of the critics but had to admit that it was of surpassing merit from the point of view of academic drawing. But this led them to believe that Weber was deliberately perverting his art. "No one is going to believe," said the New York Evening World, "that nature alone ever made anybody so bad an artist as all this. Such grotesquerie could only be acquired by long and perverse practice."

Weber was small and boyish-looking, and mild in manner, a young man of the mimosa breed. To one as sensitive as he these criticisms cut to the quick. But for all his shyness and sensitiveness he had a fighting heart. He was a seeker after new forms, an experimenter, and all the vituperation in the world could not stop him.

In February, 1912, he had an exhibition at the Murray Hill Galleries, which he hired for the occasion, and where he was his own gallery attendant. The critics again greeted his work with derision, but a few discerning people were beginning to see that Weber had power, that he could draw, and that he was a colorist of high rank. It is almost a truism that the recognition of new talents, when they have the personal force and power that Weber has, does not come from the constituted art authorities. It comes usually from other artists and from persons who have nothing to do with art, and who have not been blinded by fashionable prejudices. This was true with Max Weber. He made several friends and supporters in the show of 1912. Among these was Hutchins Hapgood, a writer then on the staff of the New York Globe, who found in Weber's work splendor of color and a profound concern with the problems of space. Against him stood the Globe's art critic, Arthur Hoeber, who found in the same work only "distorted notions of art requirements, ugly color, hopelessly stupid drawing, and absurd compositions." Most of the critics agreed with Hoeber. On the side of Hapgood were Robert Henri and Arthur B. Davies.

Henri was then in the midst of his battle against the stagnant and

self-appointed officialdom which was stifling American art. Henri had brought to America the message of Courbet, Manet, and Degas, and had stimulated a renewed interest in Hals and Velasquez, and in the American realist, Thomas Eakins. He and his immediate followers accomplished a minor revolution in American art just before the advent of the modern movement. Davies was an artist of impeccable taste, a romantic idealist with strong literary leanings and steeped in the American tradition of "seeing beautifully." His charming visions of womanhood in marble with rose and ivory tints made a strong appeal to American art lovers. He was one of the most sensitive of connoisseurs, and because of his high standing with collectors was able to help the moderns.

Just as the show in the Murray Hill Galleries was about to close, Henri came there with a group of students. He was greatly interested, especially in some of the still lifes, which he said were painted with a beauty achieved only in the greatest art. Henri told his students they must come again to study the show. Weber told him this could not be, for his time was up and he could not afford to hire the gallery another week.

"It mustn't close," Henri replied. "People must see it."

Always the most generous of fighters for freedom of expression in the arts, Henri went to the owner of the gallery, an art collector, and persuaded him to keep the Weber show open for another week.

Davies was a staunch supporter, and from time to time bought Weber's works, usually the most advanced things. "You've got it, Weber," Davies would say. "These academicians can't touch you."

There were few such appreciators of Weber in those days, but he could take comfort in the fact that his work was appreciated by those who knew, the connoisseurs among collectors, and painters who, like Henri and Davies, were profound students of their craft. In fact, for many years, though the public and the critics responded very slowly to his work, Weber's exhibits were always thronged by painters and students.

Weber, with his deeply philosophic turn of mind, understood that the public would not appreciate his work at once, for he knew that to appreciate a work of art the spectator must become creative. "There are always two cathedrals, two pictures, two symphonies—the outer and the inner—the one expressed and the other in the spectator . . . To find the quality in a work one must invest it with personal quality already acquired by him, the spectator or student . . . To perceive quality is to possess quality. And even when we find quality in works, then the process of

assimilation must begin. Food must first be digested. Simply to possess it one might starve. To possess art is to live it."

The year after the Murray Hill show marked an important date in American art. A group of artists banded together under the presidency of Arthur B. Davies and formed an association to bring to America an exhibition of contemporary European painting and sculpture and to show it with the work of the leading American artists of liberal tendencies. The exhibit was opened in the Armory at 28th Street and Lexington Avenue, in March, 1913. It achieved national prominence overnight through the storm of ridicule and abuse which it aroused, principally because of publicity which was concentrated upon Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase." The Armory Show gave the conservatives of American art a jolt from which they have never recovered. It had an immensely stimulating effect upon the younger artists. Pulses were quickened. To the painters and sculptors it seemed a great blast for freedom. They felt the shackles of academic conventions fall from their wrists. It appeared that the ideas which had been filtering into America for the past five years, and for which Max Weber had been preparing the way, were to have real influence at last. Galleries devoted to contemporary art sprang up here and there. Every group show issued its defiant manifesto to the world. Plans for an American Independent were discussed. New art magazines were founded. Life seemed worth while.

Life was very much worth while to Max Weber. There were many things in America which interested him and which he had learned to see through his discipline in modern art. The art of the Incas, the Mayas, the Aztecs, the Indians of the Pueblos and of the Northwest Coast, drew him on one hand, and on the other he was fascinated by the stupendous dynamism of New York, the skyscrapers, the great bridges, the subway and the elevated. He would point out the design which may be seen in the movement of streets, in the thrust of skyscrapers, the great arcs of the East River bridges, or in geometrical shapes seen in a shooting gallery. All these things he put into his pictures.

In "Chinese Restaurant," "Rush Hour," "New York at Night," "Grand Central Station," "Brooklyn Bridge," there is an apparent chaos of geometry, but guided by the order that is found even in chaos. There is a clash of dynamic forces as expressed in the opposition of geometric shapes, cones and hemispheres, the round and the triangular, the vertical, the horizontal, the oblique.

For months after his return to America he fairly lived in the Museum of Natural History, making studies of American aboriginal art. His thrill at seeing such things as the totem poles of the Pacific Coast tribes, or the sculpture of the Mayas and the Aztecs, he has communicated not only in his art, especially the woodcuts, but also in his books of poetry, *Cubist Poems* (London, 1913), and *Primitives* (New York, 1926). Many of the poems were composed in the Museum of Natural History. One of them, written on a bit of paper against the knee of Chac-Mool communicates the feeling which the first view of this great work of sculpture aroused in Weber.

Chac-Mool of Chichen-Itza,
So art thou imbued with energy of vision
That thy stare into the future with unequalled velocity
Leaves all behind thee, as thou hast and always wilt.
Thou wert made once so, to witness all that passes and all that shall pass.
Thy time endless, one breath of thine, the intervals between the opening and closing of thine eyelids
Is a great part of eternity.
Thy weight and power was made to endure and bear,
Thou wilt stand the fiercest storm, heat, cold,
Thou wilt suffer and conquer change, time, emotion, sorrow,
All will pass and come again to go again, endlessly thus;
But thou art eternal, thou art the sign of eternity.
Thou wilt see all and know all always.
The cup thou holdest so firmly in thy powerful and untrembling hands,
Shall forever receive the raindrops from gentlest shower to the waters of the maddest cloudburst.
Again to evaporate and rise from thy cup
Again to fall and to be received by thee.
Forever thou watchest, listenest, to the eternal truth,
Thou art agent and medium of the infinity of all things.
Would I were with thee, if I but could and knew how,
Even though of clay thou art made,
Thou knowest more, thou feelest more, thou seest more, thou rememberest more, thou art more.

Oh my brother in eternity, Chac-Mool of Chichen-Itza.
Would that I could but hear thine unuttered speech in silence and heavenly mood,
I feel our minds greet and kiss each other.
A liquid sweetness of soul and peace,

Flows living from me to thee and from thee to me.
What wisdom thou hast, what power,
Thy stern lips of thy firm mouth have spoken, do speak, and will forever speak.
Thy nostrils ever will breathe of endless time and space,
Thy pulse ever will mark time,
Thy shoulders' strength I know can bear the weight of all time,
Thy legs and knees so mighty can ever span the earth,
And bend and give rhythm to endless motion.
So fixed are thy feet to earth, that nothing can shake thee.
Oh Chac-Mool of Chichen-Itza,
Thou of all the earth.
Thou art composite of all, in all, to all, endless.
I doubt not thy being, and doubt not my being,
I am here with thee always, and always was and always will be.
I hear thee, I understand thee, doubt not, doubt not.
Of flesh I am made, and mortal I am,
Thou shalt remain to tell that I have been.
Thou art monumental, thou art colossal, thou art eternal.

This feeling for what is native to America, its primitive art and the work of its engineers, Weber communicated to his friends. One of these was a wealthy dilettante of the arts, Robert J. Coady, whom Weber had met in Paris. Coady accompanied Weber on trips among the cliff dwellings of lower Manhattan and to the Museum of Natural History. Later, Coady became publisher and editor of *The Soil,* by all odds the most original of the small magazines which appeared as instruments of the "American Renaissance" so freely predicted in the second decade of this century. Coady for a time was the voice of militant modernism. He was one of the early champions of the movies as art, and wrote lyrically of Charlie Chaplin and the author of Nick Carter. He reproduced trip-hammers beside Congo sculptures, and dressmakers' dummies beside paintings of the masters of the Renaissance. For a time he got on swimmingly, but in the end *The Soil* suspended publication and passed into the limbo of memories associated with the period immediately following the Armory Show.

Weber was not in the Armory Show, but he was invited in 1913 to show in England with the Grafton Group, which included Vanessa Bell, Wyndham Lewis, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, and Frederick Etchells. It was Roger Fry, keenest of contemporary English art critics, who invited Weber to show with the group. He asked Weber to send five pictures.

Eleven were sent, so that a selection might be made. The Grafton Group chose to show them all. The only other foreign artist invited to the show was Kandinsky.

Weber's "New York" aroused a great deal of discussion. The critic of the London Times said: "The picture called 'New York', though no one could guess even that it was a representation of a place, has a logic of its own like the logic of some scientific diagram. One feels that it is not a pure caprice of the artist, while the form and color certainly have an abstract beauty." One writer called "New York" a representation of "the kind of mind picture that floats before one at the delightful daily phase of existence that lies between sleeping and waking . . . a perfectly normal condition quite as much worth while producing as transient effects of landscape." The Daily Telegraph critic, Sir Claude Phillips, was disturbed by Weber's subjects. He said: "Max Weber is a born colourist, and altogether a technician of great subtlety; but these qualities are thrown away on the subjects which he selects for elaboration."

The reception of Weber's work in London was far more hospitable than it had been in New York. Roger Fry admired Weber's paintings very much, and wrote to him: "I wish to tell you, if you will allow me, how greatly struck I was by the extraordinary power that they seemed to me to indicate. You have understood and absorbed the principles of design in a most remarkable way. I wish to let you know how much pleasure I got from your works."

Fry undertook to find an art dealer who would handle Weber's work in London. The English were interested not only in Weber's paintings, but also in his writings. His *Cubist Poems* was published in London in 1913, by Elkin Mathews.

Another important event in Weber's life at this time was his meeting with John Cotton Dana, librarian of the Newark Library, and creator of Newark's newly established Museum. Mr. Dana was the most liberal and far-seeing American museum director of his time, and also the most courageous. His interest in the newer developments in the arts dated back to the 1890's when, as librarian of Denver, Colorado, he began to follow the exhibitions of French and German innovators as they were reported in continental periodicals. He became greatly interested in Weber's ideas, and commissioned him to work out color schemes for the Museum's exhibit rooms, and later to select a group of antique casts. Mr. Dana was impressed

with Weber's knowledge of color, and with his taste in selecting works o art, and he invited him to exhibit in the Museum. Of his meeting with Weber, Mr. Dana wrote:

"About 1912 I had the good fortune to meet Max Weber and t have him work out some color schemes for the Newark Museum. Mr Weber's paintings were not having much popular success at the time, an I must say that I did not see exactly what he was trying to do. But h proved to me in the decorative work he did for the Museum that he ha a wonderful flair for color and that he was a master draughtsman. I becam convinced that no museum director in America could afford to reject wor like Weber's simply because he did not like it."

The Weber exhibition at the Newark Museum was opened in June 1913. Seventeen paintings were shown. Mr. Dana wrote a five page in troduction for the catalogue. It was the first time in America that a museum director had attempted to give the public a sympathetic introduction t the modern tendencies in art. "Whatever may be the fate of this develop ment in art," said Mr. Dana, "it is today of sufficient importance, if only because of the tempest it has aroused, to warrant all sensible people in giving its products a little careful observation and a little serious thought."

The sensible people of America were not prepared to follow Mr. Dana' advice. Not much careful consideration or serious thought was given t modern art. The splendid hopes aroused by the beginnings made in 191 came to little. The Armory Show, which was to have been a liberatio and a stimulation, in the end did little more than introduce in Americ the hippodroming methods invented by that extraordinary person, Guil laume Apollinaire. The American public and the American painters re mained indifferent. As late as 1927 Royal Cortissoz could report that th "bulk of American painting is untouched by modernism."

The public accepted the assurance of the academicians that modern art was all a flurry caused by a few misguided and eccentric artists. An then came the war to put an end to things. The interest aroused by th exhibition of Weber's work in England was killed by the war. In Americ the excitement over the modern movement died down as the war hysteri mounted. For ten years American art languished.

During the war period and the years immediately following there wa no market anywhere for the works of the more advanced artists. Webe remained in virtual retirement from 1915 to 1923, exhibiting only on rare occasions, and then only in group shows like the Independent. He ha

two exhibitions in 1915, one a retrospective show at the Ehrich Galleries, and the other at Montross. These shows met a varying response. Henry McBride said that no one interested in the art life of today could afford to miss Weber's work, and that "Women and Tents," was "one of the finest works of modern art yet produced by an American."

Still there were always more detractors than appreciators. The experimental nature of Weber's work, his restless search for new forms, led many to speak of influences, and they turned up the names of Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, African sculpture, and the Chinese, as if these were names of skeletons which they were producing from the closet of Weber's past. This question of influences is one which needs much clarification. In our shallow thinking about art we make much use of the word "original." But originality, in the sense in which we use it, confounds the original with the unique and makes the quest of the original in art a quest for Barnum and Bailey monsters, two-headed calves and lion-faced women. A man who is original has his origins, and he establishes contact with them as roots establish contact with the soil. The artists of the Renaissance, and the great Chinese, understood this. They were not afraid to borrow from each other or from the past. Neither are the French artists of today. The soil in which an artist must be rooted is the soil of art, and each artist has his preferences for certain kinds of soil. The soil of art, like any other, has a tendency to become thin. It runs to barrenness if it is not fertilized. Weber is rooted in the great Western tradition, and he has fertilized its soil with new loam from the very roots of Oriental and primitive art, the soil which made these arts fertile. Through all his searching and all his experimentation he has been himself. He has studied the arts which exercised an influence upon him until he has found himself in them. This process he has well described in *Essays on Art:*

"Yesterday I saw something. I took the memory of that thing with me. I knew more. I felt more. I wanted more. No one could tell me better what I saw, and no one knows how much more, and what more I must see of that thing for my satisfaction. Some one tells me what he saw in the same thing, but I am certain from his description that that person saw quite a different thing. He saw himself therein, and I saw myself. But I did not see my whole self and therefore I had to go back to look at least once again. When I behold an object, an art work, it becomes more that very moment, for I put part of myself into it along with the life of its maker."

In the lean years of the war period, Weber turned again to art teaching as a means of support. From 1914 to 1918 he taught at the White School of Photography, in New York. He had two classes, one in the history of art, and one in art appreciation. It was in connection with this work that he wrote *Essays on Art,* which was published in 1916. The following excerpts will give some idea of the rare quality of these art lectures.

"Art is the real history of nations. Their politics, their wars, their commerce, are but records, as the calendar or the clock is not time itself. The people find themselves in their great artists.

"The consciousness of art, which ranges in intensity from creation to appreciation, develops a richer and riper humanity. This art consciousness is the possessing of the spirit of things, rather than the matter of things.

"I pass the flower bed. I live the flowers, their color and fragrance. Leaving the flowers for others to live them in the sense that I did, is the truest kind of democracy. Humanity has yet fully to learn how to be conscious of the living spirit in the inanimate worlds. This they will learn through an appreciation and an awareness of fundamental art forms . . . Sometimes I feel that even inanimate objects crave a hearing, and desire to participate in the great motion of time . . . The flower is not satisfied to be merely a flower in light and space and temperature. It wants to be a flower in us, in our soul. Things live in us and through us. . . .

"I crave to know and I listen and I feel and I see. Nature inspires me with its living rhythm. Its waves of stillness that vibrate over its prairies, in its forests, over its mountains and valleys, and its oceans, in the solidity and strength of its mountain strata, in its minerals and in its hidden rocks, stir in me the feeling of visible cathedrals and towers, and of orchestras and poems.

"Works of art are man's revelation of nature's contents. We know nature better through art. Science proves to the mind; art reveals to the heart. To infer from the visible the invisible, to penetrate the opaque, to soar high into space, and to dive deep into the seas, to walk through fissures into the center of the earth, to imagine one's self being a fish or a bird, is to penetrate more into the spheres of the unknown . . . To invest all darknesses and emptinesses, and all inanimate objects with human energy and feeling, is to reveal the mystery which art alone can reveal.

"Thus to personify matter with one's senses, embodying the inanimate with spirit is a sacred function—the piety of art. One might almost say that the tree speaks, the winds play, the sun shines and colors through

the painter, the poet, and the musician. All lies silent and in wait for the creative spirit to liberate it from its nature bonds.

"The Parthenon or the Rheims Cathedral or a Buddha Temple or an electric dynamo once slept in the quarries and dreamt in geometry. . . . There are other Parthenons, other symphonies, other Congo sculptures, other Gobelin tapestries waiting for the master to breathe reality into them."

Though he spoke much of modern art to his classes, Weber never failed to express his reverence for the great traditions of art. "To scorn or slight the real of the past, the unswayable, makes one conspicuous but not creative. . . . As a guide and incentive one holds before him the indisputable ideals in works of art . . . The plastic spiritual principles or ideals embodied in the Parthenon, in Archaic sculpture, in the Assyrian and the Egyptian, and in the color and design of Minoan and Persian, Chinese and Indian porcelains, rugs, and paintings, are a permanent source of inspiration . . . Strangeness or peculiarity or singularity does not make for quality. Strangeness wears off, peculiarity in time even bores, and both perish—but real quality ripens and grows in excellence and becomes a plastic memory, virile with beauty . . . Whatever form of so-called modern art might yet be invented or evolved, time, as always, will decide whether its modernity or newness shall ever ripen with age and become part of tradition. The ancient was once modern, but will the modern become ancient?

"The other day I stood and looked at an Etruscan statue. It smiled its good old peaceful smile, and I asked it at what it smiles forever. And it whispered gently: 'At the noise and speed of modernity.' "

In the spring of 1920 four modern artists were invited to teach at the Art Students' League in New York, each for two months. Weber was retained as the permanent instructor of the modern class, and he taught through 1920 and 1921. He gave to this teaching at the League the same earnestness and thought which he gave to his own painting. After two years he found that it used up too much of his energy, and he resigned in 1921. He returned to the League in 1926 at the earnest solicitation of a large body of students and taught through the school years of 1926 and 1927. Again he found that he could not continue both as an artist and as a teacher, and he gave up his class. He was one of the most sought-after instructors at the League. There was always a waiting list of thirty or more students ready to join his class whenever a vacancy occurred.

Weber came out of his retirement from the art world in 1924 and again began exhibiting his work. He had two one-man shows in that year one at the Montross Gallery, on Fifth Avenue, and the other at the New Art Circle, on West 57th Street. During the period of his isolation Weber's art had matured. The Chinese philosopher, Lao Tse, has said that a man may see the universe from the window of one room. During the years between 1915 and 1924 Weber literally retired to one small room where he took stock of his universe.

In Weber there is an almost perfect balance of the man of thought and the man of feeling. With him feeling is first, and then comes thought to discipline and direct. He can become passionately absorbed in the visual aspects of things, and he can stand off and contemplate them in detachment. In his student years he became interested in researches into the theory and practice of art. It was a self-conscious period, that decade between 1900 and 1910, and there was a great deal of thinking, theorizing, and talking about art. All this helped Weber to become conscious of his purposes, and made him one of the ablest thinkers on modern art, and a teacher who could formulate its principles for his students. In Paris Weber had been concerned with processes and means. In America he became preoccupied with the spirit and purpose of art. Of the relation between means and spirit Weber has written in his *Essays on Art:*

"Means in whatever form they bespeak for us. If we work in color pigment speaks for us. If we work in clay and bronze, clay and bronze speak for us. Our thoughts, our ideas of things, our words and language speak for us; and so with every form of creative work or expression . . . The purpose of means is expression. Thoughts creative must pass through the doors of means. Means are the gates between the inner and the outer between the real and ideal, between the expressed and the unexpressed. The passage is made up of all species of matter that serve the spirit. The spirit as it passes through these gates between the outer and the inner must clothe itself with suitable apparel. Homer's spirit at these gates chooses the Odyssey and the Iliad, David's spirit the Psalms, Greco's spirit the Laocoon, Bach's spirit his wonder fugues, and likewise with whole races, their art, their literature, and their other culture.

"The spirit is more even though it may not be expressed, than any means if such exist only as means, or as cold technique. A color must be more than a color. A form must be more than a form; it must suggest the

sacred more only found in the spiritual. Everything must be more than it is visibly."

Max Weber's research since his return to America has been guided by the belief that everything in his art must be "more than it is visibly." During the years of his isolation he went back to his sources. Racial memories and influences from his early environment assumed greater importance. A biblical mood of revelation and prophecy began to dominate his figure paintings—"Adoration," "The Rabbi," "Solo," "At Evening," and others—in which he used types based on childhood memories. "Weber has always been biblical in his seriousness," said Henry McBride. "It is an immense thing to have a background and to speak for a race. His color has a haunting richness that suggests the prophets and their lamentations in the Old Testament. . . . In a way I scarcely know how to define, it seems to have come straight from the Old Testament to Weber. It is sombre and with something in each tone that seems to crystallize a human experience."

There is austerity and dignity in this biblical mood. The tragic and the melancholy are restrained with a Byzantine severity. This is apparent in "At Evening," or in such a study as "Draped Head" of which Duncan Phillips wrote in his *A Collection in the Making:* " 'Draped Head' is a little masterpiece of tragedy. The tormented soul of a race speaks through this portrait which carries on the Byzantine and El Greco traditions."

This biblical spirit in Weber had to pass through the door of the means which he had acquired in his long training in America and in Europe. Weber's work shows an extraordinary range of means. In the course of his development he has recapitulated the history of art in the western world. Art, like man, must be reborn with each generation, and each new birth must sum up, in one way or another, the history of the species. Weber has ancestors in the great European tradition, ancient and modern, in the direct line of descent; and he has spiritual relatives in China, Persia, India, America, and Africa. The influence of the ancient peoples of America, the Incas, the Mayas, and the Aztecs is stronger in Weber's work than most people imagine. He is the one painter in America who has reached a deep understanding of these indigenous American expressions—the sculptures of Peru, Yucatan, and Mexico, the totem poles of the Northwest Coast, and the Kachinas of the Southwest. In his woodcuts—"Prayer," "Profile"—in his figure paintings—"The Worshipper," "At Evening," "A Solo," "Tranquillity"—and in his small sculptures, there is a fusion of what has been called Weber's Hebraic quality with the qualities of Maya and Aztec

sculpture. The spirit of Chac-Mool lives again in many of Weber's most powerful figure compositions.

At the sources, the expressions of all races are akin. At the level of the primitive, art still knows a universal language. In the highest expressions of a world art, of which such work as Weber's is a prophecy, this universal language may be recovered. In Weber's matured expression, many elements have been fused and tempered in the fire of the great tradition of Europe and America to make a powerfully expressive art.

The public appreciation of this art has been slow, but it has been growing in recent years. This growth in appreciation has been due partly to a greater familiarity with it, and partly to Weber's return in his later work to the use of recognizable objects in his paintings. We all like to see what we expect to see. Weber has always refused to flatter the public in its likes and dislikes. In his earlier canvases not much account was taken of the public's desire for the pleasures of recognition. Even in his later paintings his indifference to naturalism has kept out of his work that illustrative element which is always so popular. Weber's indifference to naturalism, and his use of exaggeration and distortion, the public and some of the critics set down as bad draughtsmanship. They do not see that Weber is not concerned with making a more or less accurate representation of the appearance of isolated things, but that he is creating an ordered relation of forms and spaces.

The central problem of the painter is that of achieving ordered spatial relations within the rectangle of his canvas. This problem must be solved in the terms of the medium. The set of ordered spatial relations achieved in terms of a medium must communicate something to a beholder. The question then arises: what is the communication to be? Is it to be scientific in nature, or is it to be evocative? Is it meant to arouse in the beholder the response: yes, this is a tiger, a kind of big cat, one of the largest of carnivorous animals, and so on through the catalogue. Or is it meant to arouse the exclamation: "Tiger, tiger, burning bright?" Confusion about this apparently simple matter of intention has ruined more than one artist and is the Reef of Norman's Woe upon which such institutions as the National Academy ultimately pound themselves to pieces.

Weber does not use arrangements of forms and spaces to make exact statements about things. He uses them in such a way as to evoke the whole situation of seeing and the emotion aroused by it. This evocation must not be mistaken for scientific statement. In a statement of a scientific kind we are given a symbol which refers to an object. Many people interpret works

of art as scientific statements about things, and they refer to their memory of things similar to those they see represented. If the objects as represented in the picture agree with this memory the picture is judged to be a good one, true to nature, and even beautiful if the painter and the beholder are in agreement as to what constitutes "seeing beautifully." This is not the way to look at pictures, certainly not at the pictures of Max Weber. His pictures, and those of any other artist worthy the name, are intended to be looked at as objects in which the search of the beholder comes to rest, and not as symbols which refer to other objects.

The problem of statement and evocation is perennial in art. Evocation is the all-important thing, yet experience indicates that evocation must not wander too far away from statement. A minimum of statement seems necessary to make the bridge of communication. For this reason an artist needs to turn to nature always. This turning to nature, in the opinion of those who think very little about art, means that the artist must make exact statements about objects. Hence the raucous laughter of an academician when he discovers that such paintings of Weber's abstract period as "Rush Hour," "Chinese Restaurant," and "Women and Tents," are not simply fantasies, but are made up of many visual contacts with actual scenes. Laughter, like any other instrument of ridicule, cuts two ways. In this case it cuts cruelly into the laugher and reveals the diseased condition of his organs of understanding.

Weber's research in abstract art in his earlier years, and in his abstract period (1916-1920) is fundamental to all that he has since produced. It was an endeavor to handle nature architecturally within the great moulds of geometry. But there is another element in this abstract painting besides the geometricizing of nature. Abstract art is in one sense a revolt against the narcissism of European art and an emphasis on the impersonal qualities which one finds in the great Chinese, and in the work of such men as Piero della Francesca. The extreme phase of this revolt is Cubism. At the height of the revolt all associations except those of the forms within the rectangle of the picture were excluded. Any attempt at the imitation of objects or expression of the artist's personality, any suggestion of tactile quality or imitative texture, or of the warm-cold effect and associative suggestion of colors as they appear in nature were disavowed. This goes beyond even the great Chinese, because with them painting is an art of the brush stroke which becomes as intimately associated with the personal style of the artist

as his handwriting. No artist can live for long at the level of the glacier beauty of impersonal art. Weber is no exception.

Even in Weber's most abstract work the personal element is felt. The color is always expressive. There is a richness in it and a subtlety of tone that is very personal, particularly when it is low in key, as in the blue-black-grey of the Crystal Figure studies, or in "New York—the Old and New." Weber's personality is felt in everything he does, yet he has never gone in for orgies of personal expression—German "expressionism," for instance, or the cult of the brush stroke which was so much the thing a few years ago.

"Anything that has been shaped or constructed possesses a part of the life of the maker of that thing," says Weber. "The maker lives in the things he makes. Even his tool becomes warm in his hand and palpitates with his very pulse."

It is evident in everything Weber does that part of his life has entered into it. This is apparent in his still life studies. He has a passionate sense of things, and this sense gives a heightened beauty, and a thrill of discovery to his arrangement of even the most commonplace objects. Of "Black Chair," Elisabeth Luther Cary, art critic of the New York Times, and a consistent admirer of Weber's work, wrote in 1923: "A black chair, a yellow-brown floor, and yellow-red chest of drawers—a strong, agreeable composition if it had stopped there, but made mysterious, enthralling, by just the ridiculous trifle of introducing a few well-baked rolls on the table, the kind of rolls that are dusted with black seeds. The little dust of black unites all these vigorous colors as a little spring mist rising from the ground turns a prosaic landscape into moving poetry. It takes quite a great artist to do this sort of thing."

In "Still Life With A Loaf" there is an impeccably right placing of objects, as if they had been planted there by nature. The picture is painted with the ease that results from profound study. Color, rich and mellow, fine arrangement and suggestion of textural quality bring out the charm that is inherent in humble objects in "Egyptian Pot." "Blue Saucer" is made visually active by a rhythm and interplay of forms and a color harmony that is subdued but rich. "Zinnias" has an Oriental glow of color and a rightness of formal relations which is hieratic.

Weber's still life paintings won public appreciation long before most of his other work. In still life the personal transposition of local form and color is always easier for the lover of the literal to accept than in figure compositions. Another reason is that Weber handles the most commonplace

objects in his paintings with religious reverence. Our civilization is so cluttered with unloved things that the message of a man who loves the humble objects of daily use comes to us with the force of revelation. Weber has written of his feeling for things in his *"Essays on Art"*. He says:

"We speak about things, but we seldom hear things speak to us. Things, objects, mutely cry to us: 'Touch us, taste us, feel us, see us, understand us, make us more than we are through your association, through your tactile and spiritual intimacy.'

"He who appreciates the principles of proportion, harmony, balance, symmetry, in simple objects finds that these qualities are in him, and it is only through things that one discerns himself. We are in things. I need a cup or garment. So much of my life's need is in them that they are essential to my life. A room is empty—a thing is brought in and I am no more alone.

"Culture will come only when every man will know how to address himself to the inanimate simple things of life. A pot, a cup, a piece of calico, a chair, a mantel, a frame, the binding of a book, the trimming of a dress. Culture will come when people touch things with love and see them with a penetrating eye."

In Weber's landscapes there is a harmony between the demands of design and of nature. They show a power to handle nature's forms within the moulds of geometry, a power which springs from intimacy with the life of nature and an acquiescence in her laws. "The feeling of art-form in us," says Weber, "should correspond to the very laws of energy, of consistency, of equilibrium, of adhesion and cohesion, of gravity in nature."

Arthur B. Davies used to say that Weber was the greatest landscape painter in America and the greatest painter of trees in the world. Anyone who looks with an understanding eye at such paintings as "Avenue of Trees," or "Two Trees," will know what Davies meant. In both paintings the forms have the simplicity of geometric solids, in both a profound love of nature finds adequate expression. Transient aspects of the scene have been cleared away and the fundamentals preserved. "Avenue of Trees" has a subtle harmony of grey tints with one strong note of green. In "Two Trees" there is a balance of color areas varied with passages of interharmonized tints. Every part of the canvas is right in distribution of form, in color harmony, and in value. "Old Barns" is another canvas of this type, inspiring a mood of awe before the mystery and force of nature. Landscape painting of this

kind is a visual poetry which might run to preciousness in the hands of a lesser man.

"His landscapes are emphatic in pattern and potent in color and light," writes Duncan Phillips. " 'High Noon' is the record of a sensation and a mood. It tells of that profound depression which we experience under a blaze of sun in a corner of the world which has become too familiar. The areas of cold blue, burnt orange, vivid green and warm violet, designed with accents of black and pepper red, and with the mauve high lights on the housetops, all this Oriental color-orchestra powerfully affects us in its Persian splendor pervaded by melancholy. The assurance of Weber's brush-work and the opulent quality of his paint proclaim the hand of a master."

The most difficult of all Weber's work for the general public is his figure painting. Many who do not understand his methods are repelled by his use of heavy female figures in his compositions. But this criticism of course, has no relation with Weber's art. He is not concerned with female charm, sexual or otherwise, with appealing to the reserve of amorous feelings which, so psychologists say, is in all of us. The colors which he uses for his flesh tones are not used to suggest the seductive colors of flesh, but result from his understanding of the use of color as design, the lovely muted orchestration of subtle grey tones, the excitement of interharmonized tints, the massive counterpoint of color areas.

Weber is concerned, primarily, with architecture and solidity, with a logical structure of forms distributed in three dimensions, an equilibrium of weight. This is the key to his use of heavy figures. His plastic interpretation of these figures is guided by his conception of gesture, an arm stretched out, the poise of a head, the relaxation of a limb. His aim is to realize in plastic terms intervals of human significance ranging in mood from ecstasy to repose. Similar aims may be read in the moods and attitudes of Tanagra figurines, in the stillness and grandeur of Chinese Buddhist sculpture, and everywhere in primitive art.

Weber's problem is to realize a significant human attitude, and to make a satisfying spatial disposition of forms. He finds at once that there is conflict between the demands of gesture or attitude and anatomy, between local form and architecture, just as there are conflicts between color, and light and dark, and between local color and color harmony. He endeavors to find an equilibrium in which these conflicting demands may be harmonized.

This leads him directly to distortion, emphasis, and suppression. His

deep understanding of primitive art has taught him how much an arbitrary handling of the human form may add to the emotional force of a work of art, as it does in the sculptures of Yucatan or Africa. "Distortion," Weber has said, "should be born of a poetic impulse. It should be the very quintessence of our finest and most subtle discernment and preference. To emphasize is the endeavor to subdue the local, the obvious, to the aesthetic and the personal."

The harmony which Weber achieves through an equilibrium of opposed elements may be studied in figure compositions like "At Evening," "The Solo," "The Balcony," "Gesture," "Tranquillity," "Advancing Figure," "Music," and others. "At Evening" has a deep brooding quality, biblical in its intensity, an emotional force which is surely controlled. The color is low in key, but rich and varied with fugitive accents of red and green. The significant human attitude is powerfully realized. There is a rapport between the figures, a balance of form against form, color against color. Each has its right place in a harmony. All interplay for one purpose—to make a satisfying architectural order where forces find rest in equilibrium. "At Evening" shows Weber's feeling for the rhythmic movement of forms, his sense of the effect to be got out of the attitude of a figure, the gesture of an arm, the pose of a head. A primitive and religious feeling pervades the canvas.

"Gesture" is a small picture, big in conception, which resolves the opposing claims of design, of gesture, and of anatomy. The design is masterly with its rhythm of triangular forms that give it weight and dignity. The color is rare and beautifully contrasted, green against red, yellow against blue. In "The Balcony," the sculptural existence of bodies and their mutual regard and balance are clearly stated. The main color theme of the painting is in a low key with a green cloth and a red headband employed as accents. This is the secret of a great colorist—pure color employed with rarity and well placed on the canvas. No one could mistake "Tranquillity" or "Music" for endeavors to express sexual charm. The gravity of the forms and the reserved color give these pictures a mood of impersonality and detachment akin to the art of the great Chinese.

One of the first critics to appreciate the power of Weber's figure compositions was Henry McBride. "His work has the authentic air of things seen in visions," McBride wrote, "and I find myself accepting his people unquestioningly because of the mere art of the painting . . . The unusual weight with which he endows his figures . . . The passion with which

he believes in them and the passion with which he paints them . . . One of the finest painters . . . existing anywhere. One of the world's best ten, yes, best six. . . . He is a natural born colorist of the first rank. His sense of design is infallible."

Weber's work, viewed as a whole, falls into a series of related periods. In his early years in France he was concerned with technical research. The thoroughness of this research shows in all Weber's work. His oils have an opulent quality of pigment, and an extraordinary tonal register, ranging from pure color to the subtlest of intermediary tints. The brushwork is superb. The medium is thoroughly understood and is at all times under control. This perfect control of the medium shows also in his handling of gouache and water color. In "Colonial Fruit Bowl," or "Man's Head," for instance, there is no dependence upon the accidental, on the chance interblending of pigments in a flowing medium. There are no tricks, no displays of brush stroke virtuosity. The treatment is clear and precise, modulation is gauged and controlled surely and swiftly. In the pastels there is beautiful gradation and blending of tints, and that bloom of color and vaporlike luminosity which is the characteristic charm of the medium when it is well handled. Weber's consummate craftsmanship shows in everything he does, in his drawings and paintings, in his woodblocks and lithographs, and in his sculptures.

In his early American period (1909-1912), Weber became more concerned with expression. He composed figure studies striving to achieve a deeper emotional expressiveness within essentially plastic means. In this period he thought much about the power of the childlike and the primitive in art, and he was drawn to a searching study of the force that is in the aboriginal arts of America, which though highly individual are akin in spirit to all the primitive arts of the world. His woodcuts, and such paintings as "The Worshipper" and "The Sisters" are good examples of this period. "The Worshipper" is the very essence of it. In it the greatest emotional power and beauty are expressed with the minimum of plastic means.

From this work Weber was led into a research in construction and geometric consistency. In the first part of the period (1912-1915) he was concerned with form in three dimensions. This was the time of the Crystal Figure compositions. In the latter part of the period Weber thought a good deal about the simplification of space relations, and perfection of proportion. From 1915 to 1916 he eliminated the third dimension and concentrated on proportion, dividing his space with especial regard to the

relationship of forms and the background upon which they were distributed. The color gamut of this proportion period was low in key, as most fitting to the work Weber was doing. He used pastel a good deal and made a series of pastel studies of Maine, one of which is reproduced in this book. The lithograph, "Pewter Cup" is made after a design of the proportion period.

This concern with proportion and the relationship of forms led directly to his abstract period (1916-1920). "Chinese Restaurant," "Card Players," "Woman Bathing," "Conversation," "The Cellist," are typical of it. Weber here uses memories of the visible in nature to create arrangements of forms which liberate in the spectator like memories of sight in which he can move freely and creatively. In these paintings all Weber's studies in expression, construction, and proportion were brought into play. There is in them lovely color quality and suggestion of textures, perfect proportion, and a scrupulous regard for geometric interplay and distribution. In painting of this kind, and in the painting of the proportion period there is great danger of preciousness, a danger which many modern artists have not escaped. This tendency to preciousness may be restrained by a love of nature, as in the great Chinese, or by an understanding of primitive art. Weber has never forgotten nature. He has always adhered to the grand advice of his paternal friend, Henri Rousseau. And he understands the primitives as few others understand them.

In his latest period, roughly from 1920 to the present time, Weber has made a nearer approach to nature, and with a greater understanding. He accepts the unchangeable facts of nature and seeks a harmony between them and the inexorable laws of design, through a highly personal selection, emphasis upon the essential, and elimination of the accidental. Like the great Chinese painters whose work he has loved since his student days, he has no interest in the merely accidental, and like them he paints a good deal without the model. This is not painting from memory, but painting from knowledge. With Weber it is always based on a long study of the model in all its aspects. When he is ready to paint, memory has eliminated all but the essential, and he is prepared to "keep the one large out of the many large, to keep the one small out of a million small, and the one blue out of a million blues."

"The facts of nature," says Weber, "baffle the finest inspiration, but one must go to nature or remain in the clouds. When art builds on art, art dies. When art comes through nature it plants its own seed for its blooming in seasonable time and place. It is only when man addresses him-

self to nature in deep reverence, in silence and isolation, that he hears the response. Yet to have nothing but the facts of nature is to be always going, compassless, with nowhere to go. It is not the purpose of art to duplicate nature or to represent it. Art dies when naturalism dominates. I believe that the expression of an experience must go further than the experience. The expression of an experience should give rise to still another, a newer and a still more inspiring experience. To fill eternity with the ripest and the sanest expression of our consciousness is the essence as well as the purpose of life."

In Weber's work fact and sensibility are submitted to the discipline of the intelligence. He is not trying to escape nature along the path of personal expression, nor is he trying to escape into nature along the path of imitation. He is seeking an order paralleling that of nature, and in this he is akin to Cezanne and to all the artists of the past whose works have lasting significance. It is evident in Weber's work, and in his writings, that he believes that painting must pierce through the data of sense to the discovery of a universal order. He sees art as an interpretation of life. In a very profound sense he has a message—not as a guide to conduct, or a propaganda for a certain way of life, but as a revelation of life itself. If this message could be condensed into one word it would be the word, equilibrium.

From 1923 there has been a growing interest in Weber's work. In 1924 he had a one man show in the Bernheim Jeune galleries in Paris, with over fifty paintings on display. All the leading artists in France visited the exhibition and commented upon it. Later many of the paintings were sent with traveling exhibits to other cities in France, in Germany, and in England.

In 1925, 1926, and 1927 Weber exhibited at the New Art Circle in New York. Since 1928 he has been showing at the Downtown Gallery, on West 13th Street, New York, and his work has been received with enthusiasm by critics, collectors and museum officials. The museums, it is true, have been almost as slow as the general public to understand Weber's work. The first museum exhibition in Newark in 1913 was followed by no other museums until 1930. The first museum purchase was made by Duncan Phillips in 1926. The Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington now owns three Weber paintings. The first purchase of Weber's work by a municipal musum was in 1928 when John Cotton Dana bought, for the Newark Museum, two paintings, a landscape and the still life "Zinnias" which is reproduced in this book.

In 1929 the Art Institute of Chicago gave Weber its Potter Palmer gold medal for one of his still life paintings. In December, 1929, the Museum of Modern Art in New York selected Weber as one of its group of "Nineteen Americans," the second exhibition in the Museum, and it gave him a retrospective exhibition in March, 1930.

Complete official recognition of Weber has come twenty years after his return to this country from France, though John Cotton Dana showed an interest in his work seventeen years before the museum world rendered its full verdict. During the years before he was recognized by the museum world Weber's recognition came from artists—for many years he was known as the painters' painter—and from a number of collectors who saw the high quality of his work. Weber's greatest supporter among the painters was Arthur B. Davies. Among Weber's earliest supporters were Alvin Langdon Coburn and his mother. The collector whose admiration has been most consistently expressed through purchase is Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, who owns the largest Weber collection. The Phillips Memorial Gallery, the Newark Museum, the Gallery of Living Art of New York University, the Preston Harrison collection of the Los Angeles Museum, the Newark Public Library, and others, now own examples of Weber's work, and he is represented in most of the leading private collections in America.

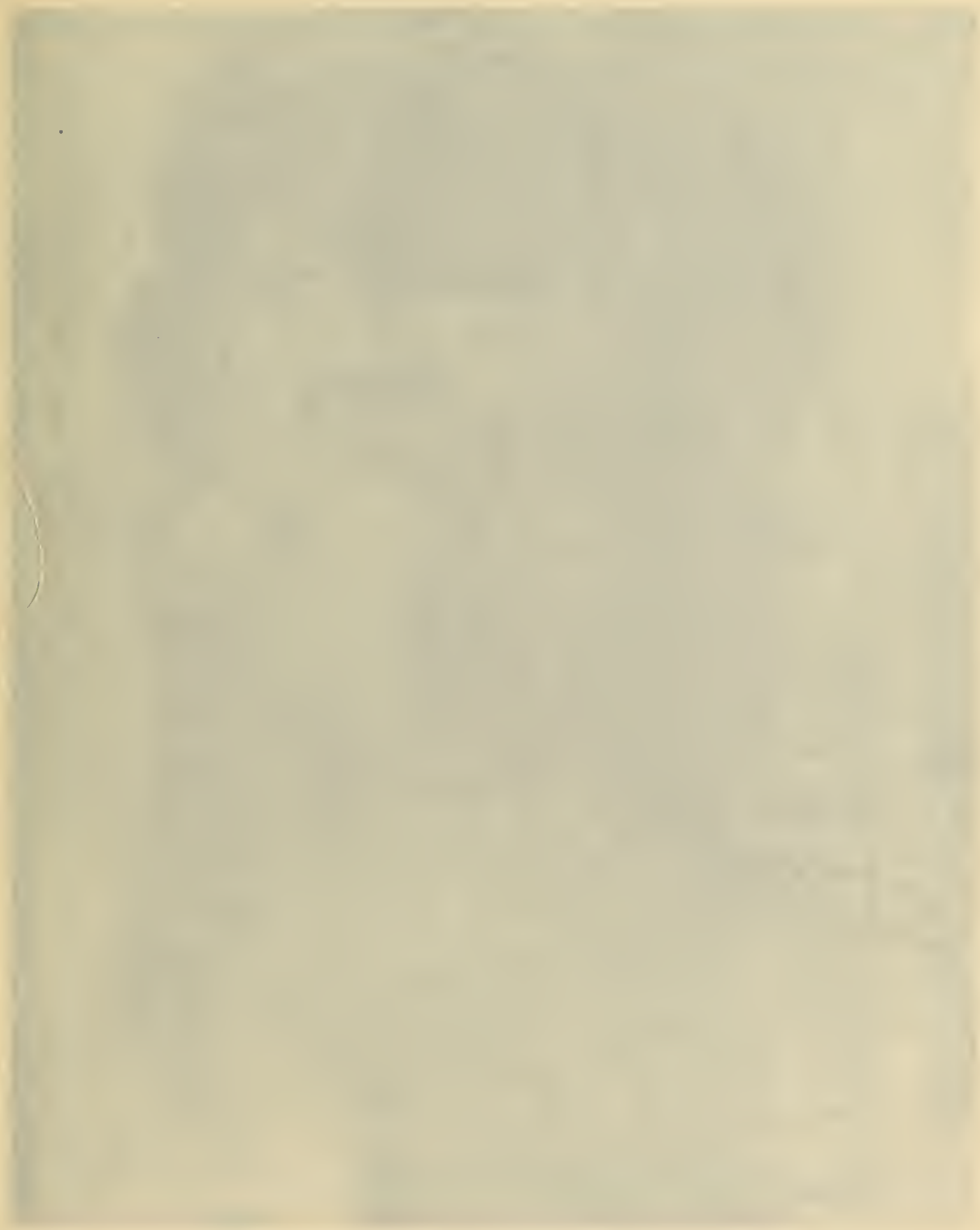
REPRODUCTIONS

1

HEAD OF A WOMAN, 1929

Drawing on Canvas Board; 16 x 13¼ inches

In the Collection of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., New York



REPRODUCTIONS

2

COLONIAL FRUIT BOWL, 1927

Water Color; 18 x 14 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

3

MAINE, 1914

Pastel; 24½ x 18 inches

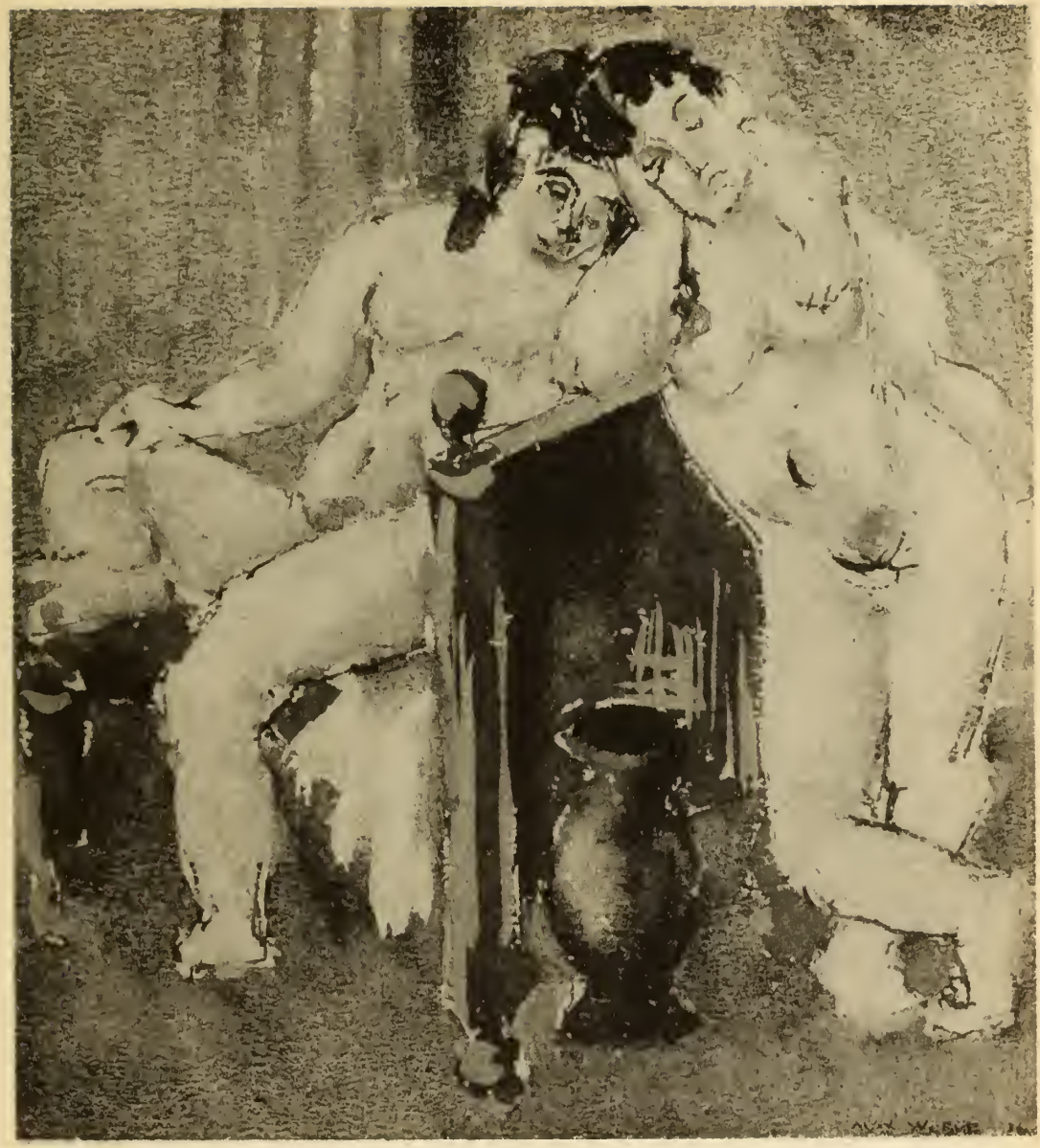
The Downtown Gallery, New York

4

BOUDOIR, 1926

Gouache; 5 x 4½ inches

In the Collection of Mr. Julius Oppenheimer, New York



5

MAN'S HEAD, 1926

Gouache; 5 x 4½ inches

In the Collection of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., New York

5

MAN'S HEAD. 1920

Limestone, 8 1/2 (21.6) height

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

6

AT THE TABLE, 1926

Gouache; 5¼ x 4¼ inches

In the Collection of Mr. Julius Oppenheimer, New York

MAX WEBER 26

7

AFTERNOON, 1926

Gouache; 4½ x 5 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

8

ACROBATS, 1926

Gouache; 5½ x 4½ inches

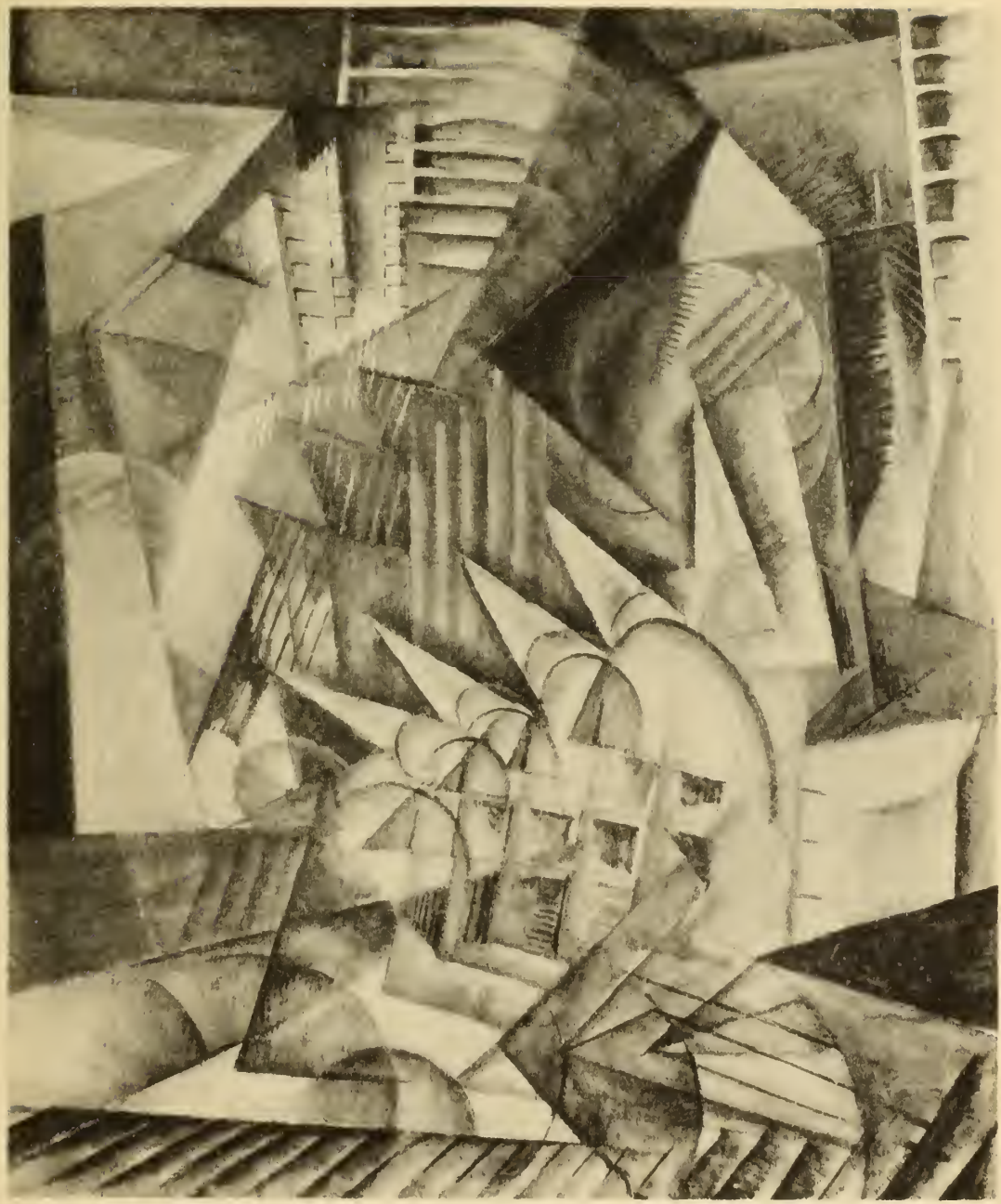
In the Collection of Mr. Julius Oppenheimer, New York

9

RUSH HOUR, 1915

Oil; 36 x 30 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York



10

THE WORSHIPPER, 1918

Oil; 31 x 25 inches

In the Collection of Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, New Rochelle

11

THE EGYPTIAN POT, 1917

Oil; 28 x 20 inches

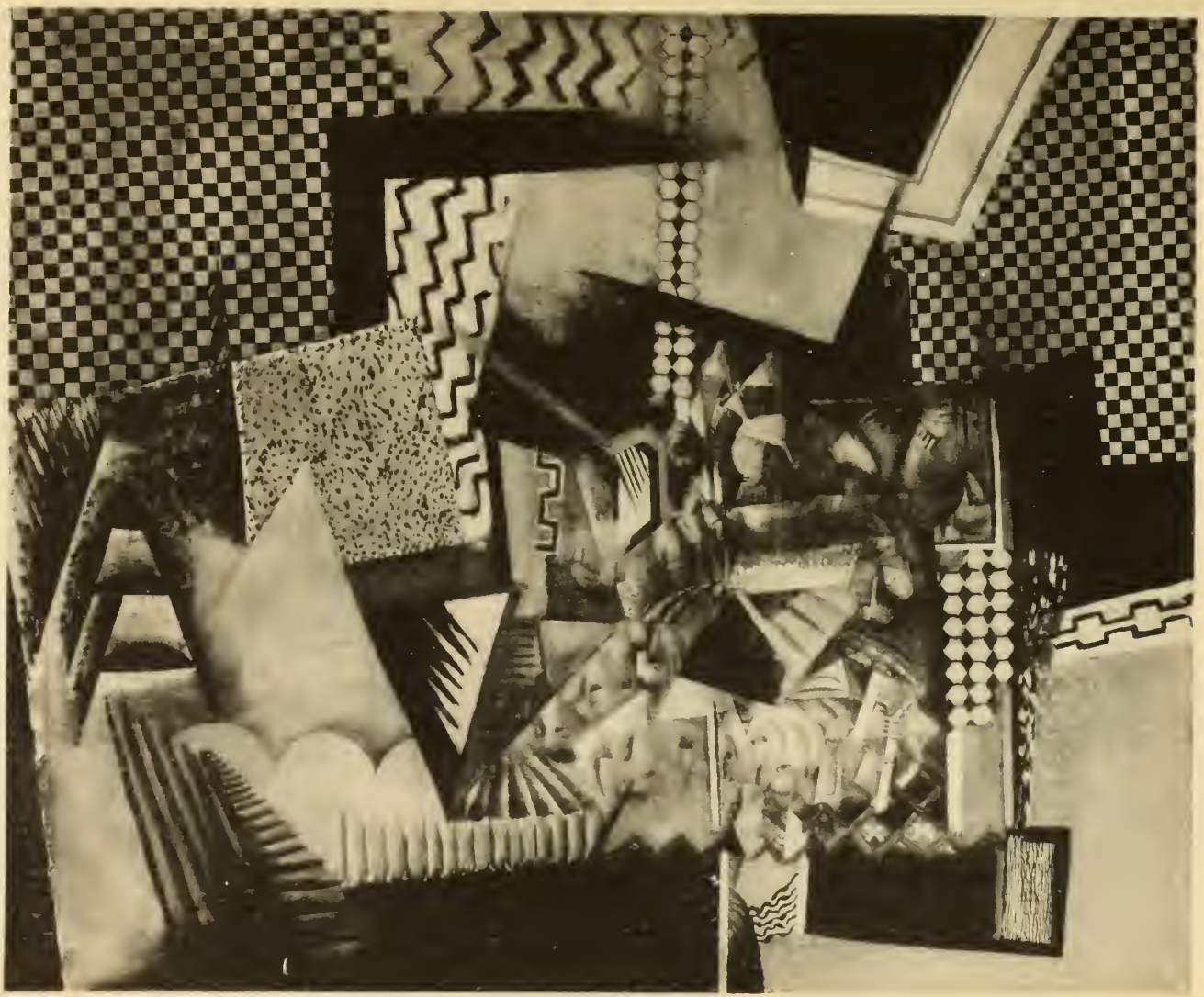
In the Collection of Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, New Rochelle

12

CHINESE RESTAURANT, 1915

Oil; 39½ x 47½ inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York



13

SOLO, 1918

Oil; 24 x 18 inches

In the Collection of Mr. J. B. Neumann, New York

14

AVENUE OF TREES, 1926

Oil; 24 x 28 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

15

THE RABBI, 1918

Oil; 24 x 20 inches

In the Collection of Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, New Rochelle

16

GESTURE, 1921

Oil; 20 x 24 inches

In the Collection of Dr. F. H. Hirschland, New York

17

ZINNIAS, 1924

Oil; 28 x 24½ inches

In the Collection of the Newark Museum, Newark, N. J.

18

AT EVENING, 1922

Oil; 35 x 45 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

19

STILL LIFE WITH A LOAF OF BREAD, 1925

Oil; 20 x 24½ inches

In the Collection of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., New York

20

DRAPED HEAD, 1924

Oil; 21 x 13 inches

In the Collection of the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D. C.

21

BLUE SAUCER, 1926

Oil; 28 x 23 inches

In the Collection of Mr. Samuel Lewisohn, New York

22

OLD BARNS, 1926

Oil; 25 x 30 inches

In the Collection of Dr. B. D. Saklatwalla, Pittsburgh, Pa.

23

BALCONY, 1927

Oil; 18 x 22 inches

In the Collection of Mr. Albert Rothbart, New York

24

SANDHILLS, 1929

Oil; 30 x 36 inches

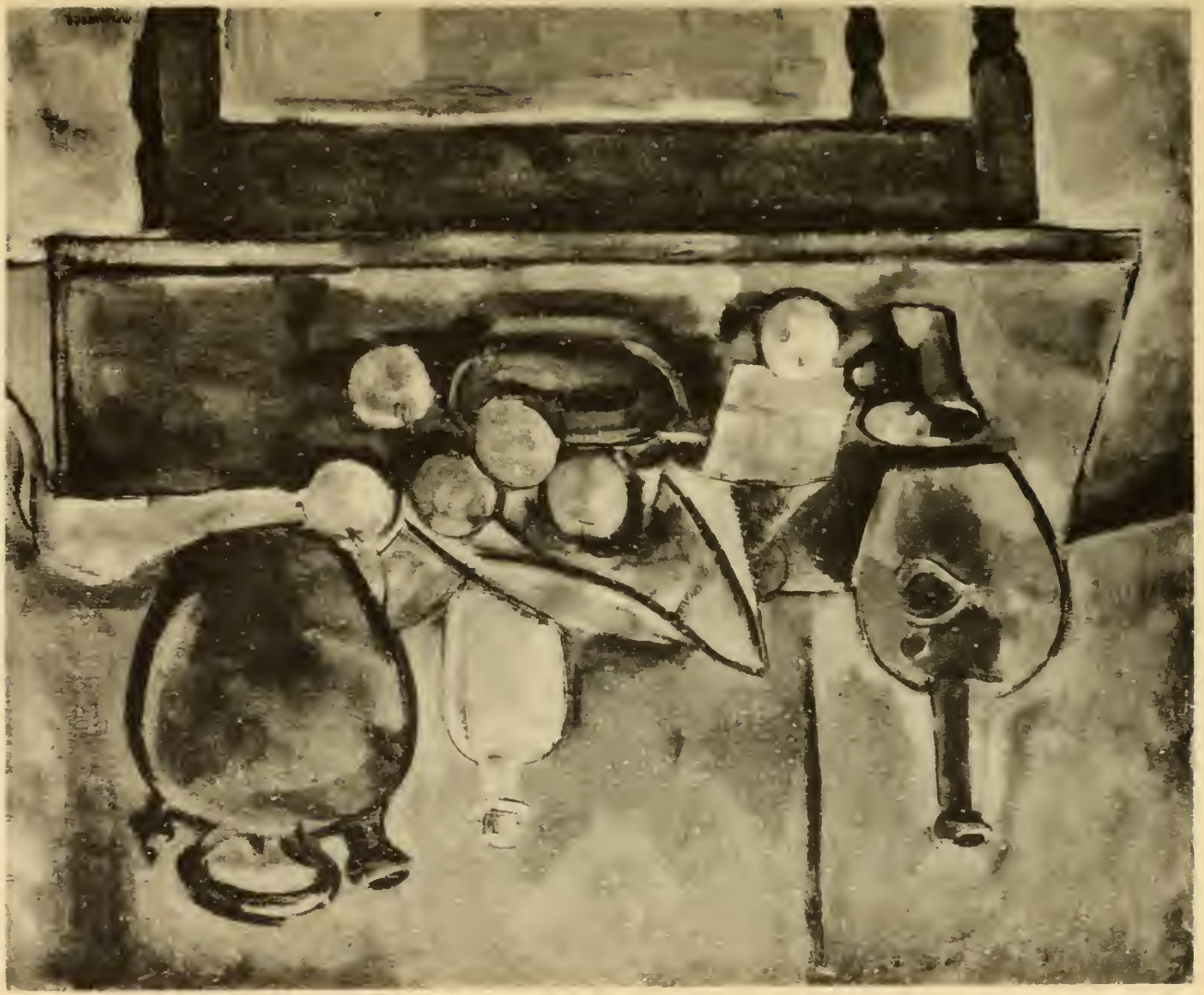
The Downtown Gallery, New York

25

THREE JUGS, 1929

Oil; 30 x 36 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York



26

TWO TREES, 1930

Oil; 20 x 24 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

27

ITALIAN PITCHER, 1930

Oil; 20½ x 32 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

28

TRANQUILITY, 1930

Oil; 32 x 40 inches

The Downtown Gallery, New York

29

PRAYER, 1918

Woodcut Colored by the Artist; 9 x 2⅞ inches

Limited Edition; The Downtown Gallery, New York

30

PEWTER CUP, 1928

Lithograph; 8¼ x 10 inches

Edition limited to 30; The Downtown Gallery, New York

MAX WEBER

31

BROOKLYN BRIDGE, 1928

Lithograph; 6¾ x 8½ inches

Edition limited to 30; The Downtown Gallery, New York

MAX BECKMANN

32
GROUP OF SCULPTURE, 1915

1

WOMAN

In the Collection of Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, New Rochelle

2

CROUCHED FIGURE

The Downtown Gallery, New York

3

HEAD

The Downtown Gallery, New York

4

SPIRAL RHYTHM

The Downtown Gallery, New York

5

FIGURES ON CYLINDER

In the Collection of Mrs. Nathan J. Miller, New Rochelle

CATALOGUE OF PRINTS

LITHOGRAPHS

1	*Mother and Child* H. 8⅜; w. 7⅜ inches	30	1928
2	*On the Sofa* H. 9; w. 12 inches	30	1928
3	*Sabbath* H. 7¾; w. 6½ inches	30	1928
4	*On the Shore* H. 5⅛; w. 6½ inches	30	1928
5	*Draped Head* H. 3½; w. 2⅝ inches	30	1928
6	*Spuyten Duyvil* H. 4⅝; w. 7¾ inches	30	1928
7	*In the Hills* H. 7½; w. 9 inches	30	1928
8	*Pewter Cup* H. 8¾; w. 9¾ inches	30	1928
9	*Egyptian Bowl* H. 7⅞; w. 12¾ inches	30	1928
10	*Repose* H. 3¾; w. 4¾ inches	30	1928
11	*Woman Kneeling* H. 6⅛; w. 3⅜ inches	30	1928
12	*Mother Love* H. 11; w. 6¾ inches	30	1928
13	*Brooklyn Bridge* H. 6¾; w. 8½ inches	30	1928
14	*Peace* H. 6½; w. 9½ inches	30	1928
15	*Sails* H. 8; w. 9⅝ inches	30	1928
16	*The Model* H. 8¾; w. 5¾ inches	30	1928
17	*Barrére Wind Orchestra* H. 7⅛; w. 9⅜ inches	30	1928
18	*Solo* H. 8¼; w. 5⅝ inches	30	1928
19	*Figure* H. 6¾; w. 3 inches	30	1928
20	*Leaning Figure* H. 7; w. 2½ inches	30	1928

21	*Nude* H. 6½; w. 2½ inches	30	1928
22	*Sculptor's Model* H. 7½; w. 4½	30	1928
23	*Rabbi* H. 8¾; w. 6¾ inches	30	1928
24	*New York* H. 9¼; w. 7 inches	30	1928
25	*Fordham Hills* H. 6⅞; w. 9½ inches	30	1928
26	*The Balcony* H. 7¼; w. 8½ inches	30	1929
27	*Alone* H. 5½ w. 4¼ inches	30	1928
28	*Huts* H. 4; w. 5 inches	30	1928
29	*The Mirror No. 2* H. 8⅛; w. 12¾ inches	30	1928
30	*Apples* H. 8; w. 14¾ inches	30	1928
31	*Head* H. 4; w. 2¾ inches	20	1928
32	*Roslyn* H. 11⅜; w. 15⅝ inches	20	1928
33	*Still Life* H. 12¼; w. 16 inches	50	1928
34	*The Mirror No. 1* H. 8⅛; w. 12¾ inches	3	1928
35	*Three Figures* H. 8¼; w. 10⅝ inches	3	1918
36	*Large Figure* H. 15⅞; w. 10⅞ inches	10	1918
37	*Two Figures* H. 9¼; w. 6 inches	12	1918
38	*French Jug* H. 9; w. 7¼ inches	30	1930

The Downtown Gallery
113 West 13th Street
New York, N. Y.

Rebay

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44
.W375
C132
1930

Cahill, Holger
MAX WEBER. New York, The Downtown Gallery, 1930.

N
44
.W375
C132
1930

Rebay

AUTHOR Cahill, Holger

TITLE MAX WEBER. New York, The Downtown Gallery,1930.

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	DATE RETURNED